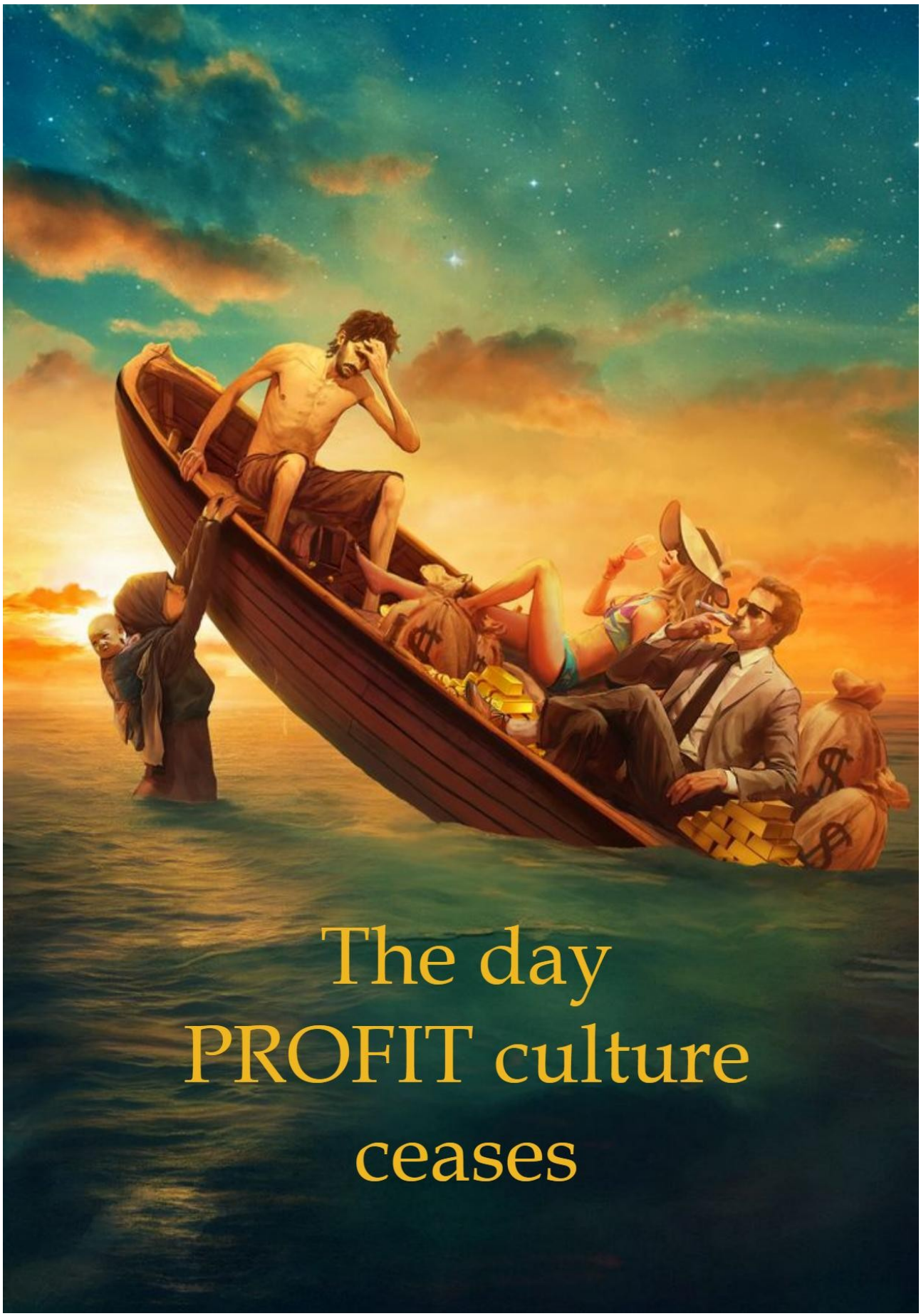
The day
PROFIT culture
ceases

THE DAY
PROFIT CULTURE
CEASES

or

How to extinguish our individual match under the cauldron that boils the world

When the culture of profit,
of domination and of balance of power ceases,
the best solutions emerge.

The culture of profit is at the root of poverty
and almost all the destruction and injustice present on Earth.

Changing the paradigm is inevitable,
moving from indignant activism to
citizen, psychological and spiritual evolution

This book is written, edited and distributed by: **Claire De Brabander**
November 2023
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post-translation: Claire De Brabander
May 2026

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Preliminary remark

Make no mistake: despite the content of the first few chapters you are about to discover, this book offers a path of personal growth. It is partly the result of my own journey, after having tried vainly to be an activist in the past, and after having gone through my own personal turmoil, which led me to simply lose the ability to have social and professional activities.
This journey is like a marathon. These are things that we do not choose at the outset, but which may ultimately corresponds to us.

I know that not everyone can afford to do a real work on oneself, and by writing down certain aspects of this journey, I would like to provide keys to understanding for anyone on a similar path, in order to save them time, energy, suffering and discouragement, which do not serve their evolution. There are realisations, insights and changes that can only come about through experience, perseverance and time, and which cannot be avoided. However, there are many dead ends, detours, mistakes and back tracks that can be avoided. There are revelations that can be accelerated by a form of mental understanding. There are denials that can be dissolved by a discourse that combines rationality, heart, intuition, and testimony. This is what I am trying to bring directly or indirectly in this book.

I hope that this book will, in different ways for each reader, depending on their experience, trigger moments of understanding, interpellate, open up new perspectives, reinforce certain positions, and even provide a form of support.
This is currently the only way I can make myself useful, apart from the journey itself. And I think it's the best I'm capable of.

Practical information:

This book is published in digital format only (PDF, e-book, HTML) and is FREE. It can be read on any digital device using a variety of applications. You can find more details here:[1]. Please do not print it if you have access to a digital device.

This book has been edited to be as interactive as possible. More details here: [2]

Then, regarding the presentation of sources and references, I chose to get off the beaten track. More details here: [3]

for sources and references in another language, it is almost always possible to obtain a fairly reliable translation: for articles and documents, via the browser (or via the website: https://www.deepl.com/en/translator); and for videos, via the automatic subtitling offered in most cases. More details here: [4]

Finally, regarding quotations and associated copyright: as permission has been sought from French-language publishers for some of these, even though they were originally written in English, the versions included in this book are, in such cases, English translations based on the French edition of the book. This will be indicated and referenced accordingly in each case in the corresponding endnotes.

INTRODUCTION

In our society, profit and enrichment are considered normal and even desirable. And those who benefit from them, whatever their role in the process, are generally esteemed, even admired.

It is worth asking ourselves a few questions about this:
Does it really make sense to get rich?
What are the consequences of becoming wealthy?
Does it really help us to be happy?

Because, when all is said and done, the enrichment of a small number of people and the massive poverty of others should raise ethical questions, not only at the political level, but above all at the personal level for each of those who are not affected by this poverty.

What is our responsibility when we become wealthy?
But also, and above all, what is our responsibility when we contribute to the enrichment of others?

There is a gulf between the implicit and explicit values in our society. And when we put these implicit values into words, we realise, in many ways, the total incompatibility between ethics and profit, and the lack of integrity and morality that has presided over the development of most of the laws and rules that govern not only our economy but also our entire society.

If corporate profit were limited to ensuring the survival of the company (operations, investment, maintenance, etc.), this would probably pose no problem. But in our society, profit has distorted the purpose of the economy and given most companies a completely different mission: to enrich those who hold capital and to increase that capital ever further; and therefore, inherently, to ensure the company's continued growth, by any means necessary. This growth also implies an inevitable competitive environment, which in turn justifies any means necessary. And these means, when they remain legal, are not necessarily the most ethical. As a result, when it comes to the working conditions of employees, the composition, quality, usefulness and sustainability of what is produced, the environmental impact of production, and advertising methods, almost no holds barred.

We are well aware of all this, and yet we continue to participate in it, either by directly benefiting from dividends and other profitable savings schemes, or by happily consuming everything that this profit machine offers us.

And nothing can make us abandon these attitudes until we truly realise the consequences of our choices. True awareness does not lead to guilt, but to greater responsibility. This implies seeking to act rightfully, rather than forbidding ourselves choices that are deemed immoral. It implies seeking to be consistent rather than applying standards that are imposed on us. It means giving the best of ourselves rather than obeying what is imposed on us. It is therefore a learning process that can only take place gradually, and which depends much more on our intentions to carry it out than on social pressures or obligations beyond our control.
This learning can be induced by knowledge, but it depends much more on our experience and our lucidity: on our own ways of functioning, on our emotions, our thoughts and our needs.

We are led to initiate this path when we begin to understand that creating profit means creating poverty. This does not necessarily give us the keys to act accordingly and find the appropriate means to change the way we function. Faced with the absurdity of current economic thinking, we tend to apply the same

absurdity to the thinking that underpins our responses in an attempt to get out of this system. In reality, our responses are often just as problematic as the problems we are trying to solve. This applies to all needs in our society and has repercussions in all areas of our lives.

To get away from these dead ends, we will have to go beyond simply opposing what currently exists. Behind the culture of profit lies a mentality steeped in power games. It is therefore at this level that we must evolve, to become capable of overcoming the reign of money and restoring priority to solidarity over selfish interests; to follow the reasons of the heart that reason does not have.

The shift will materialise rather less through a reform of current policies, or through demonstrations and rebellions by the population, than through the mobilisation of a sufficient number of individuals who will be able to conceive reality from a different perspective and behave differently.
This transformation has already begun. No one will be forced into it, but everyone will naturally be integrated into it because it is part of our evolutionary process. The threats currently hanging over our collective survival, given the extreme consequences of our society's excesses, could prompt us to leave our comfort zone more quickly and go with the flow in order to salvage what we can.

We are potentially on the eve of the collapse of society as we know it today. All areas of our lives and the management of the system are affected.

If we continue to carry the culture we have inherited with us, we will very soon find ourselves with our backs against the wall.
What I perceive is on the other side of the wall.
Crossing the wall will not be necessary if we become capable of unburdening ourselves of our cultural baggage (at least the harmful part of it), because the baggage is the wall.

I have chosen to base a large part of my reasoning on the issue of profit and the enrichment it generates, because this is the theme that seemed most obvious to me in understanding the origin of all the excesses of our society, and because, in one way or another, it concerns us all.

However, it is not the only one. That is why I will also address parallel topics such as male domination, global warming, the influence of the mass media, the theme of migrants, and many others, which are parallel components as origins or consequences of the current collapse of our society. All these themes are part of the same problem, to which we can add the current crises that are accelerating the deterioration, but also helping to raise awareness.

And while my perspective, in the beginning, is rather anti-globalisation, the content will gradually evolve towards areas such as psychology and spirituality, sometimes venturing into science bordering on new age and even science fiction.

The particularity of this approach is that it combines these fields while shifting the perspective in which they are addressed.

The content is the result of a personal journey. And even though I have gathered numerous references to support my arguments, I am simply expressing my interpretations of reality, some of which are quite radical. For me, it is a question of making the connection and understanding the interdependence between as many facets of the same system as possible, in order to find the right perspective for effective action in reality. I do not claim to be exhaustive or objective, and I am aware that cognitive biases may have crept into my words.
See the following video (in French) on this subject, which forces us to put all our beliefs, reasoning and opinions into perspective: *"Les biais cognitifs - Interview d'Albert Moukheiber | La Fabrique de l'ignorance" (Cognitive biases - Interview with Albert Moukheiber), (9'30" - 2021)* [5] - [see Ref 15].

But I have tried to be as accurate as possible in my approach and have worked thoroughly on my research for information and references, my thinking, and the text itself, taking my time. And I am confident that what I am proposing is, at least in part, new: through the perspective I have chosen, through the fact that I link subjects that are generally very compartmentalised in society, through the fact that I put into words the implicit concepts that shape our beliefs and our culture, and because my experience leads me every day to understand the validity of this way of interpreting reality.
In my view, plurality of opinion is a source of creativity and evolution. And I deeply believe that the approach presented in this book can be a solid foundation for supporting and motivating people who are on a path of personal evolution and who choose to do so in a context that goes beyond their personal interests or those of their loved ones, in order to better understand its usefulness, to be able to choose the most constructive direction, and to make it more effective, faster, and meaningful, even enthusiastic.

As this publication is not intended to make a profit, I have taken care to detail the table of contents as much as possible, matching the titles as closely as possible to the content they represent, so as to spare those who are not interested or who are already familiar with some of the topics covered from having to read them.

This book is divided into six parts. The first part breaks down and describes a number of drifting tendencies linked to our current economic and financial system based on profit and enrichment. I do not present any economic theory here. I simply point out the absurdities and injustices that this system engenders in terms of facts, backed up by figures.

The second part proposes a few ways out, but these are still considered utopian at present, even if their realisation seems to be rapidly approaching.

Before delving into more psychological considerations, the third part attempts to describe the current context in which possible changes will have to take place.

The fourth part addresses the subject on a completely different, more psychological level: that of human behaviour, which is at the root of these drifting tendencies, and highlights the need to raise the level of consciousness.

The fifth part, the most essential, focuses first on the themes of rationality, but above all on the balance of power, both of which are omnipresent at all levels of society and are at the very heart of the issues to be resolved. Moving away from the Cartesian mind as the preferred mode of thinking and letting go of balance of power are therefore part of a learning process that takes place mainly at the individual level and requires a whole process of evolution.
It is not enough to decide to let go of the systematic use of balance of power. It is necessary to first understand how their use is almost always inappropriate and counterproductive, then to become aware of when we use them or are subjected to them, and finally to learn, step by step, to abandon them and move towards other forms of behaviour.

The chapters on letting go of balance of power, in particular, are not a set of instructions or a model to follow. Rather, I describe the stage of reasoning or perspective I have reached by providing reference points, keys to understanding, and little-recognised connections. The aim is rather to resonate and encourage the reader to consider the possibility of a shift in perspective on a mental level. It is up to you to find and follow the path of change according to your level of awareness and the events that cross your path.

I consider these chapters to be the essential part of the book. Without addressing the subject of power relations, the book would not only be incomplete, but it would also lose much of its raison d'être.

However, although these chapters are already quite substantial, they are not complete or accomplished. But I do not think it is reasonable to postpone the publication of the book until I am ready to discuss them more fully. I will complete them when the time is right.

The sixth part broadens the context again to show that individual efforts are far from being drops in the ocean, as other factors influence the generalisation of transformations, which explains why the process is accelerating and why individual efforts have a much greater impact than the immediately visible local consequences.

The world is a reflection of the inner workings of the individuals who make it up. If people evolve internally, the world evolves too. The link is much more fundamental than we imagine. As David Graeber says in his book *"Bullshit Jobs - a theory"* – Publisher: Simon & Schuster (2019).

> *"Together, we create the world in which we live. Yet if we were asked to imagine a world in which we would like to live, no one would invent the one we have today."* [6] *[see Ref 4]*

We are each called upon to imagine and create the world in which we want to live, and to withdraw our active participation in the one we no longer want. This does not mean that everyone will be led to do deep inner work. It would be illusory to think so. However, the more people who get involved in this way (and there are more and more of them at the moment), the more influence they will have on the general mindset. In this last section, we will see that each individual has much more influence than it seems, and that therefore, the individual path of only a part of the population is by no means vain and will bear fruit on a large scale.

And until a certain level of evolution mentalities has been achieved among the entire adult population, we will only be able to repeat the mistakes of the past. Once the evolutionary leap has been made by a sufficiently large group of individuals, it will automatically become widespread in the entire population, and only then will we be able to teach it to our children, thereby ensuring the durability of this evolution.

The theme of change at the individual level is therefore recurrent throughout the last three parts and will be discussed from different angles. For it is this metamorphosis at the individual level that brings about transformation at the global level. Everyone's participation is much more important than we imagine, whatever the level. And my hope is that this book will provide readers with elements that will make them more confident in the usefulness of their own individual actions.

We could imagine that we are all faced with a huge ball of knots. And faced with this ball of knots, some look away and do their best to pretend it does not exist, while others are indignant and look at it with lamentation, demanding that it be untangled. And almost everyone who holds one end of the string pulls it in their direction. This solves nothing and, on the contrary, tightens each knot a little more.
However, to untangle a ball made up of multiple interdependent knots, the first thing you need to do is stop pulling the ends towards you and let go of them. Then you can begin to gently loosen the first knot without trying to untie it, just releasing it. Once the first knot is loosened, you can begin to loosen the neighbouring knots more easily, and so on, reaching the smallest, least visible ones. When all the knots without exception are looser, it then becomes possible to start playing with the whole thing and make the knots interact with each other until the first knot is truly untied. Once the first knot is untied, the others can follow more and more easily.
The risk is always to want to pull on one string or another to speed up the process, when in fact the opposite is required. The knots must be made to interact with each other. Ultimately, the unravelling occurs almost simultaneously for all the knots, as they are all interdependent.

I do not claim to be able to untangle all of this, but I am trying, through my explanations, to provide some ideas as to how to loosen some of the ties.

And putting all this down in writing in the chronological order required for a text is no simple task, given the interdependence of the subjects. I will therefore be led to repeat myself regularly, but in slightly different contexts each time. Some chapters may sometimes seem to go back in the reasoning; at other times, it may seem as if I am jumping from one subject to another. I do not think this can be avoided. In any case, I have tried, as far as possible, to make the logic as fluid as possible in order to give an overall idea.

I would like to warn readers that anyone who reads this book will most likely find themselves disagreeing with some of the questions raised. We are all concerned, and we are all partly unaware of the consequences of our beliefs and behaviours, or in some cases, in denial. I have not covered every possible topic, but many professional fields, ideological trends and areas of personal investment are addressed, whether scientists, teachers, doctors, artists, activists, politicians, people involved in personal and/or spiritual development, elites, men, women... At one point or another, you will be personally concerned. And I have not excluded myself from what I'm pointing out as problematic.
Some people will not appreciate this. But I know that, in most cases, those who subscribe to the logic I have chosen to defend in this book, and who have not invested themselves in the field in question, will accept and even approve of the comments I make.

I know that you, the reader, may not fully share the perspective I propose in this book, but I hope that by presenting it to you, certain aspects may question and stimulate you on your personal journey.

Before closing this introduction, I would like to pay tribute to the person who proofread this book: Fabienne Cuq.

Fabienne was keen to read the book before publication, and ended up proofreading it thoroughly, which helped me finalise the book. She was the one who made me understand that the content of the book builds in intensity as it progresses. But above all, she appreciated its content and told me that it had changed her perspective, leading her to question everything she observes in all areas of her life in a different way. And she encouraged and supported me to finish it and publish it. This gives me hope that others will be able to go through the same process and benefit from reading it. If so, this book will have far exceeded my expectations.

Thank you, Fabienne!

If this book brings you something important, take responsibility and share it with as many potential readers as possible. For, by embracing its content, you automatically and intrinsically become an ambassador for spreading it as widely as possible. Its success will depend on you personally, as is indirectly explained below.

Enjoy reading it.

PART ONE:

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM – WHAT LIES BEHIND THE WORDS 'MONEY' AND 'PROFIT'

A) INTRODUCTION

Like many people of my generation (post-68), I grew up in a simple environment, with little more than the bare minimum of comfort, which steadily increased during my youth. Although modest at first, my income increased considerably during my adult life. My goal was financial security, not wealth, but having a comfortable income reassured me.

Today, now that I no longer work and still have a very comfortable income, I have chosen to live as modestly as possible. It is not uncommon for people around me to try to persuade me, advising and encouraging me to buy something I have expressed an interest in, but which I refuse: "Treat yourself", "You can afford to buy something nice for yourself once in a while", "You deserve it".

And these attitudes to money around me raise more and more questions for me. Yes, I have money, and I could buy so many things. But to what end, other than to treat myself at the moment of purchase, and then quickly forget about it. What is the point of buying everything we want? And then, since I don't work, do I really deserve it? Am I not taking advantage of the labour of others? And in the context of global warming, depletion of resources, pollution and the energy crisis, how could I look at myself in the mirror if I consume everything in sight and thus blow up my ecological footprint?

I do treat myself to material comforts from time to time, but I try to remain moderate, and I usually wait months or years before buying something I want, when I really can't get it out of my head. And if possible, I make it myself or find different ways (that don't involve buying) to satisfy the need or desire that is preoccupying me.

I am certainly not a model of this kind of behaviour, yet those around me consider me to be offbeat, radical, or excessive. But I stay the course and always hope to meet people who think the same way I do about money, wealth, and what we choose to do with it.

For most people, money has to be deserved. Being rich proves that you have succeeded in life. It is a kind of competence, sometimes even heroism, to become wealthy.
And the unemployed, in a way, 'they have it coming', or they are 'idlers', 'incapables', or even 'freeloaders'. Poor people? It varies. They are either 'incapable', 'not very resourceful', or even 'idlers' as well, and sometimes 'it's just bad luck'. Bad luck to be born poor. Bad luck to be born in other parts of the world. Bad luck not to have had the opportunity to study.

The underlying assumption is that wealth is earned, and poverty too, to some extent, unless one is not born under a lucky star. And when the media tell us that a small group of rich people, not that numerous, own as much as the poorest half of humanity, we are outraged for a second, then we turn away.

In my opinion, wealth is no deserved and neither is poverty. Rare are the rich who have become so through the sweat of their brow alone. Wealth is obtained through inheritance, by elbowing your way to the top, by being being an impostor, by committing fraud, by marrying a rich person, by abusing power, by entering into castes that manufacture wealth (such as the star system or certain professional sports, for

example). And above all, if you have a good basic savings and invest it in the stock market via investment funds, you may well become rich quite quickly without having to make any effort. But to have good savings, you already have to be privileged to begin with.

And I remain convinced that the millions of people who die of hunger every year around the world do not die because they deserve it, or because of bad luck, but because others on the planet are indirectly enriching themselves at their expense.

Money is a human invention that allows for the exchange of goods and services that cannot be bartered. The difference between the rich and the poor is mainly the size of the money supply available to each. Its abundance allows some to waste and indulge their every whim, while its scarcity forces others to struggle constantly to survive.

However, in our Western economy, money is most often diverted from its primary purpose. And the way money is currently regulated (by the rich and powerful) indirectly leads to abundance for some and scarcity for others.

B) WEALTH AND POVERTY FUNCTION SYSTEMATICALLY THROUGH COMMUNICATING VESSELS

Let's start with a local example, which is certainly not an isolated one: in Belgium – a country with a population of over 11,000,000 – during the Covid crisis, while more than 35,000 people died and just as many families were bereaved; while healthcare workers went through this abyss of emotional horror and burnout; while part of the population lost their jobs, were furloughed and/or lived in extreme isolation;
the number of millionaires increased almost fivefold.
From 122,000 according to a 2019 report[7], they rose to 589,000 according to a 2022 report[8] (these reports therefore probably refer to data from 2018 and 2021). RTBF (Belgian French-language radio and television) mentions the two figures three years apart.

The enrichment of some has only been possible at the expense of others, and there are no exceptions to this rule, even if its application is almost always indirect, because these imbalances play out on a global scale.

Enrichment and impoverishment work like communicating vessels. To put it quite bluntly: whoever gets rich impoverishes someone else somewhere. And since wealth and power go hand in hand, the flow of money always goes in the same direction, on average.

Many believe that hard work and determination are the keys to becoming rich. This is not entirely false, but it is only very partially true. To become rich, you must first and foremost find yourself in a context that favours wealth. And in today's world, more often than not, wealth attracts wealth, and poverty excludes the possibility of becoming richer. The examples held up as models, extolling the determination of certain heroes who started from nothing and became ultra-rich, are nothing more than exceptions that prove the rule. And the context works like Russian dolls. You are born into a privileged family, in a privileged environment, in a privileged country, or the opposite, with possible variations that allow some to sometimes achieve wealth and others to fall into poverty. And the general context is sealed by our culture, our laws, but also by a global economic context that is worsening and remains unshakeable to this day.

Here are a few examples that illustrate this global context:

* The work of the less affluent in the poorest countries is very poorly paid and is carried out for the benefit of the richest countries. What these workers produce through exploitation is exported to the

richest countries at floor prices (even if they are often resold at higher prices to Western consumers). In addition, by subsidising agriculture, Europe is able to export other products to these same countries at very low prices, lower than those of local production, undermining local production and trade.[9] [10]

- Multinational companies created in rich countries relocate to have work done in countries where wages are low. However, the income from investments in these multinational companies mainly benefits rich countries.[11]
- Commodities (agricultural products) are produced in poor countries to feed rich countries, to the extent that industrial crops (leading, among other things, to deforestation and soil depletion) are favoured to the detriment of food crops that could benefit the local population. The products of these crops are sold at low prices (according to market prices based on supply and demand (cocoa, coffee, soya, cotton, tobacco, etc.)) in northern countries.
Multinationals from the richest countries appropriate land in the poorest countries to plunder their resources, which they then export to the richest countries, without the population of the countries of origin seeing any of the benefits, except for a few well-targeted bribes. Conversely, the population is exploited for the dirtiest jobs, expropriated from their own land, and often has to suffer the consequences of the destruction of their natural environment and pollution.[12]
- While raw materials are grown (agriculture) or extracted (mineral resources) in the poorest countries and sold at low prices, the countries of the North use them to manufacture finished products that they resell around the world at exorbitant prices, including through extremely high customs duties.[13]

* The already meagre or non-existent possessions of the poorest flow to the rich, if only through the system of interest and debt:

- at the individual level: interest rates on savings are always much lower than those on loans. And dividends, which in practice are only accessible to the richest, are conversely much higher;
- at the national level: the poorest countries fell into debt as soon as they gained independence from colonisation, borrowing from Western banks, and they have already repaid their debts several times over, but these debts continue to grow due to the interest system. This strangles the real economy of these countries in a vicious circle. And although the slate has been partially or totally wiped clean for some countries, this system continues to this day for the majority of them[14].

* Power at the global level is in the hands of the wealthiest.

- Most multinational corporations are led by executives, boards of directors and shareholders from wealthy countries who defend the same culture. They have more power and money than governments. The organisation and size of these multinational corporations make them almost completely untouchable when it comes to holding them accountable.[15]
- The G7, which is not an official United Nations body, is composed of the richest and most influential countries (Germany, Canada, the United States, France, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom, as well as a representation of the European Union), and imposes its decisions on the entire world.[16]
- Each permanent member of the UN Security Council (China, the United States, Russia, France and the United Kingdom) has the right to veto all decisions, giving them absolute power. All conflicts between countries always have, at least in part, economic causes. This veto right thus allows to always favour the member countries of the Security Council and their protégés; which can perpetuate conflicts in the long term and strangle the economies of

certain countries. Despite a recent change to this rule, this paralysis in decision-making is not about to be abolished.[17]

These are just a few examples. Thousands of articles on these subjects exist, detailing many others. And it is all interlinked. You don't need to be omniscient in this field, just open your eyes, wipe the fog from your glasses and observe that the trend is only getting worse.
Our global economic and political system is dysfunctional. It can be compared to a pan balance combined with a system of communicating vessels. You place the poor on one side and the rich on the other. And the weight of wealth will automatically shift the balance towards the heavier side, i.e. towards the rich. This is illustrated in a different way on the cover of the book, showing that the weight of the rich, even though they are fewer in number, is about to sink the boat, i.e. everyone.

Given the size and number of problems that all this entails and the scale at which it is playing out, it seems obvious that as individuals we can do nothing to change it, or very little!

However, I am willing to bet that we are denying our powerlessness by choosing to take a completely different perspective. This is not incompatible with social and activist work. On the contrary, not only does it have a direct individual impact, but it could also boost the effectiveness of certain alternative movements.

But before getting to the heart of the matter, it is best to start with the basics, by trying to better understand, beyond the concepts of money and profit, their direct and, above all, indirect implications for society.

C) MONEY - THE INDIRECT AND DISTORTED ROLES ATTRIBUTED TO IT

Basically, money is the intermediary that makes it possible to avoid bartering, and the means of exchanging objects and services that would be difficult to quantify through direct comparison. It can be used in a multitude of forms and references. It can be tangible or virtual. It is a variable unit of measurement. It is itself the object of trade.
Ultimately, the entire economy is based on it, even though its creation and value have become largely uncontrollable.

However, outside the numerical domains where it is studied, and behind certain everyday realities depending on whether the bank account is full or does not exist, it is difficult to measure how money influences our lives. Its role will be very different depending on its scarcity or abundance.

1. Means of subsistence, and well beyond

While the primary purpose of money is to exchange very different things fairly, it quickly took on the role of a means of subsistence. Only rural communities that are not very dependent on Western civilisation can remain largely independent of money.

We function within a system where, in order to survive, it is necessary to perform paid work, which forces the vast majority of the population to comply out of obligation rather than genuine personal desire.

And the less work is paid, the more all occupations and concerns outside of work will be reduced to the quest for survival. In such conditions, there is little freedom or choice. It is difficult, if not impossible, to plan for the future with any perspective. This means that we are prevented from evolving. Because in

survival mode, we don't really have the luxury of questioning things: we are concerned with being able to eat, sleep and keep warm, today and tomorrow, for ourselves and our loved ones.

However, when money becomes more readily available, we do not necessarily abandon survival behaviours. For, if money were only used as a means of subsistence, it would be much less coveted.

Once our basic needs are met, other appetites make us dependent on money. Industrialisation, technological advances and digitalisation have given the majority of the population (in the West) access to greater comfort and the satisfaction of most of our desires, but they have also created false needs. To the point of conditioning us to consume, pollute and waste, through the stimulation and omnipresence of advertising and fashions of all kinds. All this wrapped up in an education and a culture in which we have lost awareness of what is at stake.

One simple example among thousands: the average budget in Europe for Christmas spending is around €500 per household: decorations, Christmas tree, gifts, meals, parties, clothing. The figures vary from one source to another. And in some less affluent countries, this budget can exceed the value of a monthly salary.[18] [19] [20]
None of this is essential, but we have been taught that the magic of Christmas brings happiness, and that creating it requires a whole lot of staging. Even though more and more people are opting out of or suffering through this festive season.
Christmas is just one example. We could mention other celebrations, most of which originally had nothing to do with materialism; or holidays, outings, leisure activities, home improvement, and all areas that are subject to trends and appearances.

And for those with comfortable incomes, the quest to afford all the superfluous, services and pleasures means they have to earn more and more money. What's more, the system of buying on credit, mainly for housing, creates an even greater dependence on a regular income.
This creates a kind of implicit blackmail within the context of employment. It is necessary to maintain the same professional status in order to avoid a drop in income or even losing it altogether, and this makes people dependent on their employment contract and subject to conditions that are not always acceptable. And this is not necessarily conscious.

The higher one climbs the social ladder, the greater one's freedom. However, personally, I have never met anyone who openly said they earned too much money.
In this context, not having enough money becomes the norm for a very large part of the population.

2. Recognition and its commercial exploitation

Money can also be used to give recognition for work, competence, or the exploitation of certain gifts. In addition to remuneration or a means of subsistence, earning a living can also consist of recognition of our usefulness in the context of our job. Bonuses and pay rises at work, and the number of clients, are examples of this. In this sense, voluntary work is often less recognised and less regulated, intrinsically because it is unpaid.
And in certain fields or for certain categories of professions, monetary recognition is excessive and very unevenly distributed.

This is very visible in the salaries and bonuses of CEOs, for example, or in everything related to the entertainment industry: successful writers, musicians and actors. And this only partly concerns the people who are successful, even if for some, their fortunes reach levels that are largely indecent. This is because it is mainly the many publishers, agents, producers, directors and distributors who are making a lot of money in the process.

It is the very principle of copyright coupled with money, and therefore the commercialisation of art, that drives this way of operating. However, well-paid artists are very much in the minority. In Belgium, for example, in 2022, the majority of members of SABAM (the organisation that collects copyright royalties for its members in Belgium) earned less than €100 in a year.[21]

Thus, by perpetuating this system of hierarchising art through money, this system exploits the majority of artists, and by extension, everyone. Because it makes art less accessible. On the one hand, because commercialised art is therefore paid for. And on the other hand, because non-paid art becomes almost inaccessible, since only commercialised art is promoted or advertised in the media, at festivals and concert and theatre venues, in museums, bookshops, libraries, etc.; and this makes the rest invisible. And it is more often than not the rich who decide who will be known and distributed and who will not. In this way, access to much of art and culture is also a function of social status.

For example, the prices that certain works of art fetch at public auction are far beyond indecent, and it seems foolish to pay such sums, regardless of the work in question.

To give you an idea, here is an article from RTBF that lists the five most expensive works sold at luxury auctions (even though the article starts with the subject of a luxury car).[22]

And for fun, here is an example of a work of art that is only an artwork in name... and price:
A real banana, taped to the wall, price: $150,000. [23]
And then the trick that consisted of eating the banana, without depreciating the value of the "work of art".[24]

Another area where there are large disparities in recognition through monetary remuneration is the liberal professions. Certain inflated fees in certain circles and neighbourhoods demonstrate greed rather than competence. Material, administrative and property costs are one thing. But the client or patient should never be asked to pay for the glitz and luxury of these professionals' leisure activities and holidays. And in circles where this is the practice, it is not so much training, experience or competence that matters, but rather the standard of living offered, the target clientele and the pretensions displayed that make the difference between the fees charged.
And it is even worse when it comes to seminars and training courses where the daily fee is 200€, 300€, or even much more in professional circles.
When a training course for 1,000 people costs €200 per person per day, the person giving the course earns €200,000 in 7-8 hours. It doesn't matter how much the room costs or how many people help with the organisation. Nothing can justify such a price. This price is 750 to 2,000 times higher than what a labourer is paid per day.
And that's not counting certain former heads of state or ministers who are paid tens or even hundreds of thousands of euros for a single conference lasting less than an hour.

And it works the same way for everything that falls within the scope of patenting. As long as intellectual property is dependent on money, abuse will be part of it. It is common for companies to buy patents for interesting, sometimes fundamental innovations in order to block their use, so that these inventions do not harm their own more traditional production. Worse still, some companies take the liberty of acquiring patents on living organisms, which forces farmers, for example, to buy their seeds and become dependent on these companies, often ruining themselves in the process. Whereas previously they could obtain these seeds from their own harvest or locally at a reasonable price. This topic is discussed at length in Vandana Shiva's book *"Oneness vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom "* (2019) - New Internationalist Publications Ltd Publisher [25] - [see Ref 39].

Art, inventions and patents should be part of the common good, and it should be up to the public to judge their value, which should have nothing to do with commerce.

Sport is also a huge money-making machine. Football, particularly men's football (soccer for USA), but also cycling, hockey, basketball and American football, ... are the best examples of this. Here too, indecency and injustice reign supreme, when we look at salaries, the prices of player transfers from one club to another, corruption, doping, and the huge success of high-level international matches with the accompanying prostitution rings, the construction of stadiums by migrants exploited as slaves, the exorbitant prices charged for television broadcasts of matches, etc.

However, in most other cases, money is probably a form of recognition with variable value. This is because its distribution does not often correspond to the level of merit, efficiency or recognition involved. Those who have the least are very rarely responsible for their poverty. Recognition consists much more in the existence of remuneration than in its amount.

3. Money is not neutral – power and other drifts

Beyond simple exchanges, as a means of subsistence and recognition, humans, at their current level of evolution, have ended up giving money much more than these roles.

On the one hand, money itself is now traded through shareholding, stock markets and speculation, to the point of distorting the values of goods and services throughout the real economy, as returns on capital grow faster than income from labour. The rich are getting richer and the poor poorer, and this trend has accelerated rapidly in recent years.

Furthermore, things that should never have been included in financial transactions have been drawn into them, namely: basic necessities – i.e. the means of survival – as well as the common good – i.e. knowledge, information, culture and art – and finally, gift of self.

Above all, money has become a source of power: political, commercial and cultural.
For it allows the poorest to be exploited and enslaved, creating, maintaining and perpetuating the worst injustices, including wars and the potential trade that motivates them.
To such an extent that, as money has been placed at the centre of how our society functions, laws have been drafted with reference to its use and have therefore legalised the vast majority of these abuses.
With money, we can buy not only goods, services and superfluous, but also people, honesty and rights.

Money enables prostitution, corruption, exploitation and sometimes even slavery. It enables mafias, speculation, casinos and lotteries. It enables the creation of shortages, famines and everything else we are currently facing. And a large part of these drifts are completely legal, or simply tolerated. And when there is delinquency, the fight to stop it is very, very different depending on whether it is delinquency from the rich (fraud and insider trading) or delinquency from the poor (theft). Wealth often protects not only from prosecution, but also, when the offence is proven, from prison sentences.

4. Money confers status

And when there is no shortage of it, money then becomes a means of measuring oneself against others.

Alongside power and recognition, it confers status. We measure our neighbours, colleagues, friends and even strangers by what they can afford to buy: the brand and size of their car, the class of their clothes, the size and style of their home and the land around it, the neighbourhood in which it is located, their holiday destinations, their furniture and decoration: everything that goes beyond meeting our needs and simple comfort, in other words: the superfluous.

Owning your own home, or even a second home, going on holiday to the other side of the world, or even several times a year, taking part in certain sports or leisure activities that involve significant costs; all these signs give us status: they make us respectable and enviable in a way, and indirectly demonstrate a form of success, a kind of illusion, through opulence and luxury, of an ability to be happy or of certain human skills. At least, that is the (semi-conscious) belief on which most people base their management of their assets.

And among the wealthiest , the taste for luxury is much more linked to status than to a taste for quality or the exceptional nature of the coveted product. It is much more the price and the visibility of that price, of the product in question, that is sought after. The success of certain luxury brands' products lies precisely in the high price of the items on offer. The more expensive the item, the more it will sell. When there is no longer enough glitter to dazzle the neighbours, it is the price of the glitter itself that is supposed to have the same effect. And in the wealthiest circles, nothing is ever luxurious enough. This leads to a race to spend and demonstrate the most extravagant wastefulness, which the average person cannot imagine because it is so eccentric and monstrous, and which takes place in a very select world far from the eyes of ordinary people.
This phenomenon has been named the 'pecuniary emulation' after the American economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), who described it over a century ago.[26]

If you want to get a very concrete idea of the mentality that prevails among many wealthy people, I recommend watching the following videos (in French), which are very informative:

"Les vacances folles des milliardaires" (The crazy holidays of billionaires)[27]
"Ils sont au service des riches" (They are at the service of the rich)[28]
"Au cœur de l'hôtel le plus luxueux de Dubai" (Inside Dubai's most luxurious hotel)[29]

However, I do not consider these videos to be real references either. I am sharing them with you in the hope that they will provoke reactions such as fascination, amusement, indignation or disgust. They are informative but also have gossip value. They can be entertaining, while still providing a sociological insight into these circles that have completely lost touch with reality, and where the logic that leads to the display of so much wealth is pure aberration. They also allow us to recognise the primitive part of ourselves that is envious and would be tempted to go in this direction. Because it is by putting it into perspective and feeding our other reactions that we can help consolidate other directions and stimulate other modes of consumption.

Even when we are rich, we remain dependent on money.

Depending as little as possible on money means entering a higher level of evolution where balance of power, judgement and comparison no longer dictate all our actions, choices and opinions, and where we open ourselves up to allowing our peers to function in the same way. But to be able to make this choice, we must already be assured of a decent income.

D) THE CONCEPT OF PROFIT AND THE VALUES IT UNDERLIES

1. Fair profit or abusive profit

When we begin to look at the concept of profit, which in everyday language is simply a source of enrichment through trade, we realise that the concept varies depending on whether it is used in economics or accounting, macroeconomics or microeconomics, finance, or even depending on the

language in which the concept is used. It is also more or less synonymous (depending on how it is used) with gain, benefit and income.

In French, the substantive 'profit' is intrinsically linked to the verb "profiter" (to profit), which has several meanings. Apart from the aspect of "enjoying" in English, it means "to take advantage" or "to benefit". However, in the definition of the verb "profiter", a clear distinction is made between "taking advantage" and "taking abusive advantage".
In French, everyone can tell the difference, depending on the context, between "profiter d'une journée ensoleillée pour tondre le gazon" (taking advantage of a sunny day to mow the lawn) and "profiter de la naïveté de quelqu'un" (taking advantage of someone's naivety).
This difference does not seem to be so well established with the substantive "profit", especially in economics and finance.

In English, when an organisation has no profit motive, it is simply said to be "non-profit-making". In French, it's called "sans but lucratif". The words "lucre" or "lucrative" – which have negative connotations – are therefore used to contrast with a clearly societal goal, a form of ethics. And when it comes to using it in a positive sense, it is replaced by the word profit, which has fewer connotations.

Explicitly, therefore, in economics, profit is not considered unethical at all. However, implicitly, in facts, most of the time, it is.
When a company's profits do not benefit its workers (in terms of income and working conditions), nor the maintenance, consolidation or even growth of the company, nor an increase in production quality, nor its customers, but instead benefit its shareholders, there is no clear limit for defining whether the basis for this profit is fair or not. Its existence is most often justified by the risks taken by shareholders. And while the risks cannot be denied, on average and in the long term, they are relatively low for those who have enough money to invest for a long time and in a diversified manner, which reduces the risk of loss. For, in their case, when the stock market crashes, they simply have to wait for the shares to rise again. This is all the more true given that during the 2008 crisis, for example, while the real economy was in freefall, sending companies into bankruptcy, employees into unemployment and the less well-off onto the streets, and austerity policies were in full swing, the richest simply continued to get richer.
The risk so often cited in relation to stock market investments is, in practice, often quite low or non-existent, given that, when well placed in investment funds, money yields an average of 20% per year, and that the bank offering this investment automatically withdraws your money from the fund as soon as the loss reaches a percentage that you have predefined. See *the following chapter* on this subject.

Vandana Shiva, in her book (already cited) *"Oneness vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom" (2019) - New Internationalist Publications Ltd Publisher*, cites the following figures:

> *"In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the richest 1% of the population captured 95% of global growth, according to the Wall Street Journal. And while ordinary citizens lost their jobs and homes and were left without pensions or security, those who gambled on the financial markets grew richer."* [30] *- [see Ref 39]*

And when the privileged fringe gets richer and richer through profit, while the less privileged fringe gets poorer and poorer without access to profit, we consider this normal, applauding those who make a profit and even taking them as a reference in some cases; and pitying or forgetting those who have fallen by the wayside, even to the point of considering that everyone on this chessboard ultimately has the place they deserve.

> **Important note:**
> The following chapter on the indecency of dividends, and the next one on the material consequences of greed (which contains five sub-chapters), will be difficult for some readers to get

through. They contain endless figures. They will appeal to the most militant readers and those who love statistics. Otherwise, they can be really heavy going.
If you have enough concentration, courage and motivation, I advise you to read them straight away. Otherwise, I suggest you skip them and continue reading the chapter on "*It is the extreme wealth of the richest that keeps millions of the poorest dying*" and perhaps come back to them later.
But to try to motivate you to read them, I would say that, first of all, this is data that is given to us in dribs and drabs through the news, supplemented by a few other figures gleaned from books and reports dedicated to these subjects, which are probably less well known. And that these figures each reveal one aspect of a broader issue, which we may suspect but never really face up to, and that the aim of bombarding you with them is not to make you feel nauseous but to make it impossible to ignore something that we try to deny, or that remains so confusing that we continue to ignore it as if it did not exist, so that we can focus on the aspects of our lives that we understand better.
I certainly don't provide all the pieces of the puzzle, but I offer quite a few, and once they are put together, the picture that emerges can no longer be ignored. By connecting all these pieces of information, the evidence becomes obvious (you already know it, but it doesn't really bother you (except for some people, not that many) because you only know a few scattered bits and pieces buried in a mass of other information).
Not only is it useful to make this kind of clarification, but it will also form the basis for all the developments that follow, allowing the content to build in intensity throughout the pages until the end of the book, in the concepts discussed.
You can, of course, come back to it later, or skip reading these chapters. But your understanding of everything that follows will be much deeper if you take the trouble to read them. For although the content is very daunting, it is of absolutely crucial importance. In a way, it forces us to watch in an abrupt manner the extent of human error. In the chapters that follow, it will become much clearer that we participate in this much more than we are willing to admit, and we will study this complacency or denial further by looking at our shadow side.
Getting to know our personal shadow side means getting to know the collective shadow side in which we actively participate.

Come on, take heart, it's not that long. Otherwise, skip ahead to the chapter entitled. "*It is the extreme wealth of the richest that keeps millions of the poorest dying*".
If you skip ahead and read on, and understand the content, you'll end up coming back to read these chapters, because their impact and importance will eventually trigger the necessary shifts a posteriori.
In any case, it would be foolish to give up reading almost at the beginning because of these few pages. I promise, the rest is much easier to digest. At least, that's what I've been told.

2. The indecency of dividends – some figures

To avoid speaking in vague terms, I looked for information on share yields in Europe, worldwide, or in France and Belgium. There is no single figure that can be used to illustrate their importance and indecency. The figures vary greatly from one company to another, from one country to another, and from one year to another. But overall, they all point in the same direction.

In 2019, for example, while the return on a savings account was close to zero, the return on shares remained high.
If you are wealthy enough to afford a share portfolio, you can double your assets in just a few years. However, the majority of shares are not owned by small shareholders but by large families, companies and, above all, financial investors and governments. Behind the financial investors are banks, insurance companies and fund managers such as pension funds and other investment funds. While individuals

managing portfolios are few and far between, there are legions of people who invest their money through these funds. For, this is a much more profitable alternative than savings and much less risky than managing one's own portfolio, as the funds are managed by professionals and are diversified, generally with insurance that guarantees that the investment will never suffer a loss greater than an acceptable percentage. This solution allows savers to be blind to their responsibility for the investments they make, simply because they are completely unaware of what is being done with their money. Not only will they be unaware of the names of the companies whose profits are involved in the fund, but more importantly, they will be unaware of the areas in which their money is invested and how the companies make their profits. With their money spread across a myriad of different companies and their responsibility shared by thousands of other savers, they can then focus their attention on the high returns promised by their banker, They can put aside any interest in what goes on beyond the company they have chosen to invest in, trusting the person who promises them high returns and acts as a guarantor for their money.

On this subject, here is an interesting lecture to listen to (in French), offered by the Rosalux association, by Aline Farès, a former banker, *"Chroniques d'une ex-banquière"* (Chronicles of a former banker*)* (2017), which explains in a rather entertaining way some of the basic rules of the banking system [31] - [see Ref 37]. The most informative part begins around minute 40, when she starts to explain the separation of banking activities.

No bank employee will ever be able to tell you what goes on behind the scenes at banks. For, in reality, they themselves are largely unaware of the details, being mere pawns in a perverse system where responsibilities are cleverly diluted and where the perverse nature of the system becomes more apparent the higher up the hierarchy you go. Each promotion in the hierarchy is conditional on candidates making a few more ethical compromises. Power, success and morality definitely do not go hand in hand.

If you would like to know more about this subject, here is a link to an RTBF report (in French) that is well worth watching, from the programme *"#Investigation"*: *"Sur les routes cachées de notre argent : quand nos banques investissent dans le sale, le toxique et le guerrier"* (*On the hidden paths of our money: when our banks invest in dirty, toxic and war-related activities*) from 29/04/2020, produced by Emmanuel Morimont [32] - [see Ref 29].
With the exception of a few sustainable banks, all banks are affected (although the report focuses mainly on the largest Belgian banks). We blindly entrust our money to people who use it in a harmful and destructive way.
The full text of the programme can also be found at the five other links provided on the references page of this document [33] - [see Ref 29].
It is a pity that these facts, which have been known for years and studied by associations such as Fairfin, Financité (for Belgium) and Attac, or the CATDM, are only being reported in the mass media at the beginning of the 2020s.

Here are some figures concerning the size of dividends.

- Firstly, regarding the distribution of profits between the company, employees and shareholders:
  According to the report (in French) *"CAC40, des profits sans partage"* (CAC40, unshared profits) (2018), published by Basic and Oxfam France:

  > *"From 2009 to 2016, for every €100 in profits, CAC 40 companies (France) paid an average of €67.4 in dividends to shareholders, leaving only €27.3 for reinvestment and €5.3 in bonuses for employees."*[34]

- Next, let's look at the size of the dividend itself.
  According to the *May 2013* report (in French) *"Preuves à l'appui" (Supporting Evidence),* published on the Middlenext website (a lobby group for publicly traded companies in France) in the article *"20 ans de dividendes en France 1992-2011" (20 Years of Dividends in France 1992-2011):*

"The percentage of profits distributed as dividends from a representative sample of companies between 1992 and 2011 varies from 21% to 41% depending on the year, with an average of 29.1%. Over this period (20 years), the amount of dividends paid out increased sevenfold. It is the giant companies that offer the highest dividends, accounting for 85% of the total amount paid out."[35]

- In 2019, the newspaper Les Échos reported that the amount of dividends paid worldwide had almost doubled in 10 years.[36]

When the average annual rate of enrichment exceeds the value of an income, for example, it is no longer possible to justify risk-taking or the fairness of enrichment. This is because, with such gains, the wealthiest individuals (those who can afford to be shareholders, at least) double their wealth in two, three or four years, while those who struggle simply have no access to this kind of gain. It is also worth putting these gains into perspective in terms of growth – we will see this later in the chapter on growth – which is then dizzying.

E) THE CONSEQUENCES OF PROFIT AND THE INDIRECT ROLES OF MONEY

1. The material consequences of the lure of profit

a - Abuses in industry: when the end justifies the means

In many cases, in order to maximise profits, the production of goods is relocated to countries where labour is paid poverty wages, with hellish working conditions, no holidays, no weekly rest days, no trade union rights, 18-hour working days, etc. Conversely, the shareholders of these same companies mostly live in Western countries. Not only do they have the privilege of being able to afford to buy shares, but these shares rapidly increase their wealth while they sit back and watch the money roll in. The rights and money that the former cannot enjoy are directly related to the privileges enjoyed by the latter.
If I cite extreme cases, it is because they are not the exception. The free zone system encourages this kind of corporate culture, far from our eyes. And even when wages and working conditions remain within acceptable limits, the gap between money as income from work and money as income from capital remains totally unjustified.

Furthermore, multinationals engage in widespread tax evasion. They do not necessarily do so illegally. But by operating in several countries, they pull the levers that suit them to benefit from tax advantages in some countries, circumvent taxation in others by playing with the law and exploiting all the loopholes and legal gaps, and finally, many of them set up shop in tax havens to make it all very opaque.

The article *"Pour en finir avec les paradis fiscaux et l'opacité fiscale" (Ending tax havens and fiscal opacity)* by Christian Chavagneux, published in the journal *Constructif*, No. 51 (2018), by *Cairn.info*, cites several figures relating to corporate tax evasion around the world:

"On the corporate side, according to the OECD, global corporate tax revenue losses range from $100 billion to $240 billion, an estimate presented by the institution as based on 'a choice of very conservative assumptions'. A United Nations study suggests a figure in the region of $500 billion, and Gabriel Zucman estimates $600 billion, or 40% of multinational profits, resulting in the loss of around a quarter of corporate tax revenue worldwide."[37]

And these unpaid taxes are a very effective way of taking away our governments' power to manage their budgets and perpetuating so many social injustices.

Not to mention that in order to reap profits (for shareholders), many companies are willing to cause harm around them, no matter how. Certain sectors are particularly affected: examples include the arms industry, the oil industry, the pharmaceutical industry, the agri-food industry, the tobacco industry, the automotive industry and the banking sector. Directly or indirectly, some companies are willing to send people into poverty or death, as well as contributing to species extinction, the squandering of natural resources, global warming, pollution in all its forms, and preventing alternatives to their mode of operation from developing.

The largest, most profitable and least ethical companies (and these characteristics generally go hand in hand) will therefore drag other companies along in their wake. For, in this context and with current economic policies, competition requires companies to elbow their way in and cut costs at all stages of production. Local companies survive if they defend a niche market, otherwise they are absorbed by larger companies or simply disappear.

To survive, they must grow and innovate to prevent their customers from defecting to competitors. This attitude is evident at all levels of industry and commerce in society.

There is no possible ethics in the concept of shareholding, even if we reduce the extent of the injustices it generates. The idea that the pain, suffering and even survival of some can depend on the enrichment of others (who are already rich) cannot correspond to any ethical value.

If you want to get an idea of the situation by browsing through detailed data on thousands of companies, I recommend visiting the website of transnationale.org[38]
It has apparently not been updated for more than 10 years, but it is full of information on all the companies mentioned, giving an overview of the scale and prevalence of abuses. And in ten years, all this has worsened exponentially.

Only small, truly local businesses that produce useful goods or services and adhere to certain ethical values can partially free themselves from the rules of this unfair system. Otherwise, most businesses remain directly dependent on the globalised commercial network that involves all these abuses.

b - Unequal distribution of money - Wealth gaps

The disproportion between the incomes of some and the virtually non-existent incomes of others defies common sense. We have now reached a situation where wealth inequalities are extreme and continue to grow.
I suggest you watch the video of Denis van Waerebeke's film, written with Sabrina Massen, *"How to feed the world"* (2013 – 9'03"), referenced below, as it is very educational and outlines the current state of the world. It schematically shows some of the vicious circles that lead some to become rich and others to become poor, to the point of destitution and death. Even if you are very knowledgeable on the subject, it will serve as a good reminder [39] - [Ref 2].

To better visualise the huge disparities in income and wealth between different groups, I have also compiled some statistical data. I could have decided to list all these different figures in an appendix to avoid overwhelming readers. But I decided not to spare you. Because it is precisely because we refuse to face these figures head-on that we remain complacent about this situation.

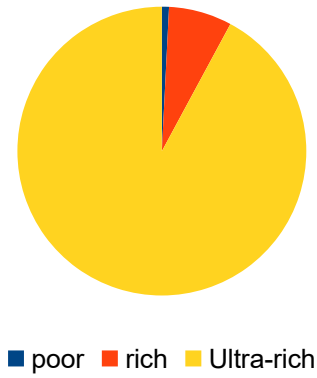
These figures relate to income disparities, disparities in income growth, wealth disparities and taxation disparities.

Let us first look at **income from work**

The *Journal du Net* website provides an overview of the average income in dollars for each country.[40] This does not indicate the size of wage gaps within the country itself, but it does offer a clear picture of global inequalities. For example, in 2016, based on data published by the World Bank, the average monthly wage in Norway was the highest in the world at $6,865.8, while the average monthly wage in Burundi was only $23.3. The ratio is close to 1 to 300. The difference in the cost of living in these two countries, which is certainly significant, cannot justify such a gap. And this is only the average wage.

Based on data from the *Forbes* website[41], and if we take the highest salaries in the world, earned by certain investment fund managers, we arrive at the staggering figure of nearly €1.5 billion in 2015, or €4 million per day. At the other extreme, according to the *Observatoire des Inégalités* website[42], in 2019, 10% of the world's population, or 740 million people, were living on less than €1.70 per day.
This represents a ratio of 1 to nearly 2.5 million (2,350,000) between the salaries of the richest and the poorest.

According to the French website *Observatoire des Inégalités*, the average monthly incomes in 2021 for the poorest 50%, the richest 49% and the ultra-rich 1% are as follows: €233, €2,058 and €26,800. This represents an average ratio of approximately 1 to 115 between the average income of the poorest half of the population and that of the richest 1%.[43]
Visually, this looks like this:



representation of average income per person in 2021,
depending on whether you are poor, rich, or ultra-rich

Of course, all these figures are relative, as they come from different sources, relate to different years, are calculated using different currencies, and, for many of them, are only estimates, given that, among both the poorest and richest populations, not all salaries are declared, recorded, etc.

But whatever the margin of error in this information, it cannot mask the enormous inequalities that these figures reveal.

And if we look **at taxes**, i.e. the financial contribution made by each worker to fuel the machinery of society in their country, these taxes currently rarely exceed 50%. This was not the case in the last century, for example in the United States, as quoted by Esther Duflo in the following article: *"Pas d'urgence à rembourser la dette, mais il faudra le faire, selon la prix Nobel d'économie Esther Duflo" (No urgency to repay the debt, but it will have to be done, according to Nobel Prize-winning economist Esther Duflo"* by the Belga agency, published by RTBF:

> *"...in Eisenhower's America, the tax rates on the highest incomes were 95-96%."* [44]

So not only are the incomes of the richest people obscenely high, but their taxes are not proportionally higher than those of middle-class workers.

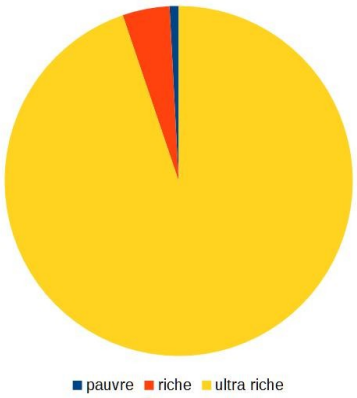
On this subject, Oxfam – which does tremendous work by regularly publishing reports, thereby challenging our mindsets and beliefs – published a report in January 2023 entitled *"La loi du plus riche - Pourquoi et comment taxer les plus riches pour lutter contre les inégalités" (The Law of the Richest: Why and How to Tax the Richest in order to Fight Inequality)* which not only analyses the situation but also makes very concrete proposals for taxing the richest. [45]

And these drifts are becoming increasingly pronounced when we look at **income evolution over time**.

According to another article published by *the Observatoire des inégalités* [46], if we take the overall figures for global income growth between 1980 and 2016, they are distributed as follows:
For the poorest 50% of the population: the share of income growth attributed to them was 12% of the total increase worldwide.
For the richest 49% of the population (excluding the ultra-rich 1%): their share of income growth was 61% of the total increase worldwide.
Meanwhile, for the top 1% of ultra-rich people in the world: their share of income growth was 27% of the total increase worldwide.

Looking at this on an individual level, this means that the average income increase for each ultra-rich person was nearly 113 times greater than that of each person in the poorest half of the population and nearly 22 times greater than that of each person in the richest half of the global population (excluding the top 1% of ultra-rich individuals). Expressed as a percentage, the ultra-rich would receive an increase equivalent to 94.79% of the pie, the rich would receive 4.37% of the same amount, and the poor would receive 0.84% – even though, as we saw above, income inequality is already monumental.

Visually, this is what it looks like:



representation of the average increase in income per person between 1980 and 2016, depending on whether one is poor, rich or ultra-rich

And once again, these are only average figures.
The average income level of the poorest half of the world's population nevertheless doubled during this period (1980-2016), enabling large numbers of people to escape from extreme poverty while remaining poor. For, given that the incomes of the poorest are null or close to zero for some of them, doubling almost nothing means remaining with very little indeed. However, the ultra-rich were already rich to begin with and did not need to become richer, while the poor needed more money in order to survive.

Note: And what about the 10 richest men in the world? Their fortunes more than doubled during the pandemic, while the vast majority of people became poorer.

Still on the subject of evolution over time in labour income gaps, here are the results of another study mentioned in the Oxfam report entitled *"Transition écologique et inégalités mondiales – Pour une approche solidaire et équitable face aux enjeux sociaux et climatiques" (Ecological Transition and Global Inequality – Towards a Solidarity-based and Equitable Approach to Social and Climate Challenges)* signed by Roland d'Hoop and published in December 2019:

> *"... two economists from Harvard and the Federal Reserve Board, Carola Frydman and Raven E. Saks, ... compared the ratio between the salaries earned by the top three executives of the 500 largest American companies and the average salary of their employees. This indicator of the evolution of inequality remained stable from the 1940s to the 1970s: the top executives of the companies considered earned about 35 times the average salary of their employees. Then, starting in the 1980s, there was a breakaway, and the ratio rose fairly steadily to reach about 130 in the 2000s."* [47]

Currently, it is likely that this average gap has increased significantly. However, quintupling or decupling a salary is already inherently totally unfair.

Yet these gaps are simply decided by those who benefit from them.
RTBF mentions this in the article: *"USA: l'écart entre le salaire des grands patrons et de l'employé moyen, de plus en plus grand" (USA: the gap between the salaries of top executives and the average employee is growing wider)* by L.V., 2019.

> *"The gap between the salaries of executive directors and the lowest salaries within the same company is only growing. However, when such gaps exist, it is no longer a question of competence, but rather a question of power."* [48]

On this subject, here is an interesting video that explains how the distribution of power in our society, along with the money, is not so much the result of the intentions of a circle of privileged ones, but rather the result of a combination of incompetence and greed for power and profit among the majority of those who hold that power and profit. This is a video of a TEDx talk by Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, an occupational and organisational psychologist: *"Why do so many incompetent men become leaders?"* [49] - [see Ref 9]

However, disparities in work income are only a part of the inequality, which must be supplemented by disparities **in property** (possessions and investment income):
In his book *"Comment les riches détruisent la planète"* [50] *(How the Rich Are Destroying the Planet)* (2007), published by Du Seuil (reissued by Editions Points in 2020), Hervé Kempf cites a ratio of 1 to 64 for the average property of the richest and poorest segments of the population (10%).
And only 5% of the population holds almost all of the shares on the stock market [51]- [see Ref 38].

In February 2020, the ten richest men in the world had more wealth than the 85 poorest countries. [52]

In 2016, *Oxfam* already stated that the richest 1% of the planet owned more than 99% of the world's population [53]

In 2017, it was reported in the news that the eight richest people in the world owned as much as the poorest half of the world's population, i.e. more than 3.5 billion people.
These figures were significantly lower just a few years ago.

Vandana Shiva gives us the chronology of this in her book (already mentioned) *"Oneness vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom"* (2019) - New Internationalist Publications Ltd Publisher

> *"While the wealth of the 62 richest people in the world increased by more than 45% between 2010 and 2015 - an increase of $542 billion, bringing their total wealth to $1.76 trillion - the wealth of the least affluent half of humanity fell by just over $1 trillion over the same period, a decline of 38%. In 2010, 388 people owned as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity; in 2011, there were only 177; 159 in 2012; 92 in 2013; 80 in 2014; in 2017, there were only 8.* [54]
> [see Ref 39]

In the aforementioned *Oxfam* report entitled *"Transition écologique et inégalités mondiales - Pour une approche solidaire et équitable face aux enjeux sociaux et climatiques" (Ecological Transition and Global Inequality - Towards a Solidarity-based and Equitable Approach to Social and Climate Challenges)* published in October 2019, Roland d'Hoop writes:

> *"In a report published in January 2019, Oxfam reveals that the wealth of billionaires increased by 12% in 2018, or $2.5 billion per day, or $900 billion in one year, while the 3.8 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity saw their wealth decline by 11%."*

A little further on, he adds:

> *"By studying the evolution of wealth distribution in the world between 1988 and 2008, we see that 44% of absolute gains went to the richest 5% of the world's population."*

And finally:

> *"... the poorest half of humanity could find themselves in mortal danger. This half received nothing of the wealth generated in 2017 worldwide, while 82% of it went to the richest 1% of the world's population."* [55]

And this is not about to stop. Again in 2022, an *Oxfam* article entitled *"Ten richest men double their fortunes in pandemic while incomes of 99 percent of humanity fall"* stated:

> *"The world's ten richest men more than doubled their fortunes from $700 billion to $1.5 trillion —at a rate of $15,000 per second or $1.3 billion a day— during the first two years of a pandemic that has seen the incomes of 99 percent of humanity fall and over 160 million more people forced into poverty."*
>
> *"If these ten men were to lose 99.999 percent of their wealth tomorrow, they would still be richer than 99 percent of all the people on this planet," said Oxfam International's Executive Director Gabriela Bucher. "They now have six times more wealth than the poorest 3.1 billion people."*
>
> *"Billionaires' wealth has risen more since COVID-19 began than it has in the last 14 years. At $5 trillion dollars, this is the biggest surge in billionaire wealth since records began. A one-off 99 percent tax on the ten richest men's pandemic windfalls, for example, could pay:*
>
> *- to make enough vaccines for the world;*
>
> *- to provide universal healthcare and social protection, fund climate adaptation and reduce gender-based violence in over 80 countries;*
>
> *- All this, while still leaving these men $8 billion better off than they were before the pandemic.* [56]

And beyond income, taxes and property, the context of the pandemic has made this mentality of seeking to become richer more visible, and even caricatural among the ultra-rich:

In the article *"Au Royaume-Uni, le coronavirus fait fondre le patrimoine des milliardaires" (In the United Kingdom, coronavirus is melting away the wealth of billionaires)* by AFP, published in the newspaper *Trends Tendances* in 2020, while a significant portion of the population saw their incomes decline, were laid off, lost their jobs, and found themselves in very precarious living conditions, The *Sunday Times* reported some most disconcerting news. Sixty-three members of the UK's 1,000 richest people, including 20 billionaires:

> *"... applied for their employees to receive assistance from the public fund set up for the duration of the crisis, which guarantees workers 80% of their salary up to £2,500 per month."* [57]

This means that people with millions of pounds in their pockets are begging the state to pay for the damage caused by the crisis, while the state is forced to go into debt to provide this aid, and in the end it is the citizens, including the poorest, who will end up paying off the debts in question, without the millions of pounds of these wealthy individuals being called into question. This shows the level of effrontery, insensibility and contempt they display towards their fellow citizens.

Or, again for the year 2020, taken from the RTBF article *"Crise sanitaire et économique : les riches encore plus riches, les pauvres encore plus pauvres" (Health and economic crisis: the rich even richer, the poor even poorer)* (2021) by N.J.:

> *"In nine months, the 1,000 richest people in the world, the top 1,000 on the billionaires list, recovered their entire fortune. And for some, the ten richest, there was even an increase in this collective fortune of $3.9 trillion between 18 March and the end of December. So it was a really rapid recovery. By way of comparison, it took the same group five years to recover their fortunes following the 2008-2009 financial crisis. So it went very quickly for them."* [58]

explains Aurore Guieu, head of the Inequality and Tax Justice team at *Oxfam Belgium*.

The same is true for certain multinationals listed on the stock exchange, which are managing to come out on top by successfully pushing up their shares by 125% on Wall Street. [59]

At the same time, tens of millions of people are falling into extreme poverty. [60]

However you look at these disparities, the figures are all equally alarming. We see these figures regularly in the media, whether they concern the richest or the insignificant figures of the poorest.

In contrast, they are rarely compared with each other. If they were systematically compared, we would no longer idolise the richest and we would stop making them richer.

Nothing can justify such disparities.
How can we explain that the extreme wealth of some cannot be shared to enable the poorest half of humanity to survive and live with dignity?

On a global level, in this context, while the planet could provide for everyone if it were managed responsibly, efficiently and collectively, the unequal distribution of money keeps a billion people in difficult or impossible conditions of survival.

If nothing is done quickly, we will soon reach a point where the richest person owns as much as the rest of humanity combined. If this were to become possible, it would not be because that person would have absolute power over more than 7 to 8 billion people, but because we all share beliefs that make us accept

participation in a totally incoherent system that is falling apart. And these beliefs favour those who continue to work to keep this system afloat.

The richest continue to get richer, and the poorest are long dead and no longer included in the statistics, and each of us contributes on a daily basis to ensuring that this continues.

This is also reflected **at the country level**. In the article *"La dette des pays en développement a plus que doublé en dix ans, selon la Banque mondiale" (Developing countries' debt has more than doubled in ten years, according to the World Bank)*, 2022, by Belga, edited by Victor de Thier at RTBF:

> *"The debt of developing countries has more than doubled over the last decade to reach $9 trillion in 2021, according to estimates by the World Bank (WB), which stresses that the risk of these countries falling into crisis has increased."* [61]

Although these countries are the poorest, everything is being done to impoverish them further and thus prevent the powers that be from providing assistance to their populations, forcing them instead to repay their ever-increasing debts.

And with the accumulation of current and future crises, poverty is once again rising dramatically, while at the other extreme, the richest are getting richer exponentially faster and more indecently than we have ever seen before.

And the fact that extreme poverty worldwide has declined in recent decades shows that there are indeed people of good will who are working hard to alleviate suffering in the world and restore equity. However, the fact that poverty has not been eradicated during this time proves that there are still enough people with ill-will who have prevented the efforts of the former from being fully successful. And it is not just a question of ill will; there is also, and above all, the inertia of those who could make a difference, those who are not directly responsible for all this, but who, through their way of life and thinking, support the problem, participate in it and perpetuate it.

A small source of hope:

Within the framework of the OECD, 136 countries have agreed to impose a minimum tax rate of 15% on multinationals. [62] This could slow down the frantic race for profit a little and restore some fairness to the system. Let's hope this is just the beginning.

Another source of hope:

In September 2023, an open letter signed by 300 people – millionaires, economists and politicians – was sent to the heads of state who were to attend the G20 summit that same month, calling for, among other things, a tax on the ultra-rich. [63]

But these improvements remain far too slow and timid to bring about fundamental change. Although they are certainly not useless, if we have to settle for progress that takes years to germinate in the minds of decision-makers, and even more years to be decided upon by a sufficient number of them, and yet more years to be implemented, we are not likely to see any major changes happening any time soon.
So, isn't it time to think about what we can do, at our level, as citizens?

2. The richest class, by far the most destructive

Not only does the wealthiest class of the population grant itself all the advantages and privileges and abuse its powers, but it is also known they are responsible for more destruction, pollution and dilapidations than all other sections of society combined.

Once again, depending on the source, the figures vary, but the trend is clear: the ecological footprint and carbon footprint of the wealthiest is disastrous, while that of the poorest has no harmful effect on the planet.

The article *"Quand la minorité la plus riche de la planète émet une grande partie du CO2" (When the richest minority on the planet emits a large proportion of CO2)* (2019) by Adeline Louvigny of RTBF cites four studies and reports from different sources:

> *"... the richest 10% account for 26% of the total carbon footprint, while the 50% with the lowest incomes ... 15%. The richest quarter of the world's population accounts for more than 60% of humanity's ecological footprint."*

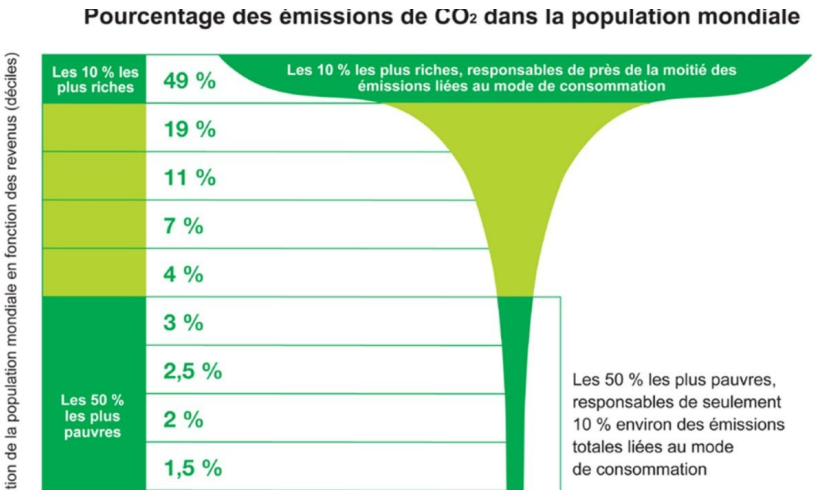
In the same article, she quotes:

> *"In 2015, Oxfam carried out a similar approach, obtaining figures that revealed even more striking inequality: according to their methodology, the richest 10% of the planet emit 49% of global CO2. That same year, a report by economists Thomas Piketty and Lucas Chancel came to a similar conclusion: the richest 10% contribute to 45% of emissions, while the least wealthy 50% contribute only 13%."*

The article goes even further, citing a study that estimated:

> *"... that the carbon footprint of the global 'elite' was 11 times higher than that of the poorest."* [64]

To illustrate this, here is a diagram published by Oxfam in December 2015 in a media briefing paper on *"Inégalités extrêmes et émissions de CO2" (Extreme Inequality and CO2 Emissions)* [65]:



Global income deciles and corresponding emissions related to consumption patterns

[Source: https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/mb-extreme-carbon-inequality-021215-fr.pdf]

Before concluding this series of quotes and references, here are some excerpts from the report published in September 2020 on research conducted by *Oxfam International* and the *Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)*: *"Confronting carbon inequality - Putting climate justice at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery"*, providing further details on this situation - in addition to the figures - which we will return to in later chapters:

> *"Over the past 20-30 years, the climate crisis has been fuelled and our limited global carbon budget squandered in the service of increasing the consumption of the already affluent, rather than lifting people out of poverty. The two groups that suffer most from this injustice are those least responsible for the climate crisis: poorer and marginalised people already struggling with climate impacts today, and future generations who will inherit a depleted carbon budget and a world accelerating towards climate breakdown."*
>
> *"It is vital to recognise that the income-based carbon inequalities explored here are intertwined with and reinforce other power structures associated with gender, race, age or caste, among others. This helps to explain why in many countries, for example, white men tend to be over-represented among the highest income groups, and women of colour among the lowest."*
>
> *"Today's extreme carbon inequality is the result of political choices made over the past 20-30 years, a period dominated by neo-liberal economic thinking and elite political capture that has seen income and wealth inequality in most countries soar,35 reflecting deeply entrenched systems of patriarchy and colonialism that prioritise domination and enrichment of some, at the cost of others."*
>
> *"The per capita consumption footprints of the richest 1% are currently around 35 times higher than the target for 2030, and more than 100 times higher than the poorest 50%. The per capita footprint of the richest 10% is more than 10 times the 1.5C-consistent target for 2030, and more than 30 times higher than the poorest 50%.*
>
> *"... between 1990 and 2015 ... the poorest 50% (approx. 3.1 billion people) accounted for just 7% of cumulative emissions..."* [66]

Over this document, Tim Gore, an expert at the NGO, adds:

> *"It is a false dichotomy to suggest that we must choose between economic growth and the climate."* [67]

Finally, in its October 2022 report *"Carbon billionaires - The investment emissions of the world's richest people"*, Oxfam states:

> *"Oxfam calculates that the annual carbon footprint of the investments of just 125 of the world's richest billionaires in our sample is equivalent to the carbon emissions of France, a nation of 67 million people. This represents an average of 3.1 million tonnes per billionaire, which is over one million times higher than 2.76tonnes - the average for someone in the bottom 90% of humanity."* [68]

The financial elite live lavishly, recklessly squandering everyone's resources, in a state of self-induced unconsciousness fostered by the culture in which they are immersed and the practices and beliefs conveyed in these circles.
The latest craze for wasting money while increasing one's ecological footprint is space tourism. Some people, beyond their pharaonic villas, yachts, car collections and private jet trips around the world, are reserving their place for several hundred thousand dollars to spend 10 minutes in space. [69]

Another "anecdotal" illustration for the curious: the massive use of private jets by a wealthy elite, which is causing their ecological footprint to skyrocket, but are now being tracked down on the internet. [70].

And this rampant consumption and widespread waste, which is generally justified by the need for "growth", results in injustices suffered by the social classes at the bottom of the pyramid and the destruction of the environment in every possible and imaginable way.

3. At the other end of the wealth scale, millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions are dying

> *"...the issue of hunger should have been resolved long ago. Since the 1940s, we have been promised its disappearance. It would soon be a thing of the past: Kissinger announced it in Rome in 1974, it was included in the Millennium Goals, by 2030 there would be no more, etc. The truth is that there is no will. The solutions are within our reach. We produce enough food for the entire planet. It is poverty that prevents millions of people from accessing it."*
> Martín Caparrós, interviewed by Isabelle Rüf of Le Temps newspaper about his book "La faim" (Hunger), published in 2015. [71]

If we take the figures from the List of causes of death by rate on Wikipedia as a source: nearly 57 million people die each year. [72]
And according to figures published in 2022 by 238 NGOs to UN members, nearly 8 million people die of hunger every year worldwide. [73]
This means that nearly one in seven deaths worldwide is linked to hunger.

Having given you the figures on the wealth of some, I am not going to spare you the figures on the poverty and mortality of others. Because we need to stop denying the facts, and I think it is useful to compare these two extreme realities, which are intrinsically linked but which we generally refuse to confront explicitly, whereas by comparing them, we may be able to restore a fairer balance, drawing on the wealth of some, by communicating vessels, to redirect it to the poorest communities, without putting those from whom this wealth originates at risk of poverty.

One of the most common rules in our financial system is that it is legal for the private financial wealth of a single person to exceed the GDP of several countries. Yet we know that these amounts could save millions of people who will die of poverty within the year, or lift hundreds of millions more out of poverty. And yet nothing, or almost nothing, is being done to divert the fate of this money and restore the chances of a dignified survival for these people. The richest are seen as the ones who create wealth, value, jobs, and growth; who keep things running in a way that seems to justify their wealth. But if you think about it, they're the ones who are plundering and destroying the planet.

A particularly striking example of the enormous gap in values and references between the rich and powerful and ordinary citizens was revealed in a flagrant manner when, in the spring of 2019, Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris burned down. In just four hours, offers of between €100 million and €200 million each were put on the table by several multinationals to finance the cathedral's reconstruction. When compared to charitable initiatives such as the "téléthon" in France and "télévie or the "consortium 12-12" in Belgium, which each year raise X million or tens of millions of euros (depending on the cause and the size of the target audience) during the duration of the operation, while participation is offered to millions or tens of millions of citizens in these same countries with the aim of improving the lives of other citizens, the observation can only be shocking. What tens of millions of people manage to raise in donations over several days or weeks to save other people, multinationals can offer with a snap of the fingers in just a few hours without saving anyone.
This has made the imbalance of power between those who hold wealth and those who do not extremely visible.
By releasing such sums so quickly, for a mainly material cause, these companies (and their leaders) prove, perhaps impulsively and unintentionally, not only that they have these sums and much more at their disposal, but also indirectly this demonstrates the implicit values that drive them.

In just a few decades, our economic system has succeeded in killing hundreds of millions of people.
Professor Pogge, of Yale University, quoted in the article in Le Point magazine mentioned on the following website of Inter-Reseaux.org [74], stated in 2016 that world hunger has killed 450 million people in 25 years. This figure is monstrous when we consider that the world population was close to 7.5 billion in 2016 and that in 1991 it was close to 5.5 billion. This would mean that more than one in 15 human beings died of hunger during those 25 years.

And since we know that wealth is distributed very unevenly around the world, it is clear that in some parts of the world, a quarter, half, or even entire communities have been decimated. Yet these people have simply disappeared from poverty statistics. More than 800 million people still suffer from hunger in the world (compared to more than a billion 30 years ago – meaning that 450 million have therefore died).

And even though the number of people who still die of hunger and malnutrition each year has fallen by more than half – to around 8 million – inequalities continue to grow. (According to figures published during an awareness campaign by 238 NGOs among UN members in 2022, one person dies of hunger every four seconds. [75]

No war, no dictatorship, no pandemic has ever killed so many people, and yet it remains planned. The Millennium Development Goals set in 1990 aimed to halve extreme poverty in the world by 2015. Setting such a goal ultimately means planning to leave the other half suffering and dying.

To back up this information cited by Professor Pogge, I searched for other statistics on the internet. Unfortunately, I could not find the figures for the 1990s. Back then, it was estimated that 20 million people died each year from hunger and malnutrition. Currently (2022-2023), the figures differ depending on the source and the year, and articles are much more likely to mention the number of millions of people at risk

of death than the actual number of deaths. I quoted above a figure of nearly 8 million (according to 238 NGOs). Another source estimates the number at more than 9 million per year. [76]
And I would really like to draw attention to the fact that most articles mentioning figures on world hunger take into account people suffering from hunger without mentioning those who have already died. In my view, this is a form of denial of the problem. For, mathematically speaking, it minimises the reality.

Because the fact that we are told year after year that these statistics vary between 700 and 900 million people affected, without taking into account those who have died of hunger or malnutrition, distorts the calculation.
Let's do a quick calculation to understand this concept, without claiming that it will be accurate, since as I write this I do not have the precise figures and I am not going to take population growth into account either. The aim is to follow the reasoning, not to talk about exact figures.
If we were to take into account a figure of 800 million human beings in distress due to hunger worldwide. And if this number were to remain stable over 10 years, it would mean that, given that around 8 million people die each year from hunger and malnutrition, the number of people affected after 10 years that we could assume to be real (without taking population growth into account) would be 880 million, or 10% higher than the number mentioned. In this way, if the figure of 800 million remains stable over time (which is not the case; I repeat that I am talking about concepts, not exact figures), this would mean that hunger is increasing. But this is not taken into account, because the dead are no longer included in the statistics. And given the scale of the problem, I confess that I do not understand why this bias in reasoning has persisted for so long, because apart from Professor Pogge's work, I have not seen this concept mentioned anywhere else.

Furthermore, given the scale of the problem and the fluctuation in numbers from year to year and between sources, it is necessary to view all these figures with extreme caution, as no one has been able to accurately count the number of deaths. The way in which this data is collected varies from country to country, and the line between death from malnutrition or from pathology can never be drawn with 100% certainty. What seems certain to me is that when we reach such extreme numbers, our imagination is incapable of grasping their true meaning in reality. It is completely beyond us.

Despite the gravity of the situation, it should be noted that more reliable figures show an improvement in countries where hunger is or was widespread among a significant proportion of the population. For, in these countries, there has been a notable increase in life expectancy. However, the average improvement in longevity worldwide, equivalent to 24 years of life between 1950 and 2015, cannot hide the wide gap that still exists today, given that this improvement is very uneven and that life expectancy in some countries was already extremely low in 1950 (27 years in Mali, for example, where life expectancy has literally doubled but currently does not exceed 56.2 on average, which remains terribly low). Even today, in some countries, the average life expectancy is barely above 50 years (50.1 years in 2015 for Sierra Leone), while in the richest countries, it is above 80 years.

See the *Wikipedia* page for detailed statistics. [77]

In his book, already cited, *"La faim"* (2015), Ed. Buchet Chastel, [78] Martín Caparrós writes:

> *"No scourge is as deadly and, at the same time, as preventable as hunger."*

Jean Ziegler, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, wrote in his book *"Destruction massive"* *(Mass Destruction)* (2011) [79], published by Seuil:

> *"The destruction of tens of millions of men, women and children by hunger every year is the scandal of our century. Every five seconds, a child under the age of ten dies of hunger. On a planet that is overflowing with riches..."*
> ...

"In its current state, global agriculture could easily feed 12 billion human beings, twice the current population. There is therefore no fatality in this regard. 'A child who dies of hunger is a child who has been murdered.'"

In the same RTBF article cited above: *"Crise sanitaire et économique : les riches encore plus riches, les pauvres encore plus pauvres"* *(Health and economic crisis: the rich richer, the poor poorer) (2021), by N.J.* [80], here is what it says about the poorest:

"According to estimates, the health crisis and its corollary, the economic crisis, have plunged between 200 and 500 million people into poverty around the world. When we say 'into poverty', this means that the people in question would have fallen below the threshold of $5.50 per day in 2020. Unfortunately, for these people, recovery will take more than a decade. Among these people, we note that women have been disproportionately affected by this dual health and economic crisis."

The consequences of the war in Ukraine are having a similar effect. Not only are millions of people leaving the country and tens of thousands dying in combat, but hundreds of millions around the world are facing poverty and famine due to grain shortages, and even more are falling into poverty due to soaring inflation linked to the war and skyrocketing energy prices.

4. It is the extreme wealth of the richest that keeps millions of the poorest dying

"The profits generated by fossil fuel companies in less than eighteen days would be enough to finance all of the UN's humanitarian appeals for 2022." [81]

According to an article by the Belga news agency edited by Théa Jacquet of RTBF, *"La faim extrême a augmenté de 123% dans dix des pays les plus fragiles face au réchauffement climatique"* *(Extreme hunger has increased by 123% in ten of the countries most vulnerable to global warming).* (2022)

There was a time when we had to understand that the earth was not flat, but round, and that we were not at the centre of the universe. We are now reaching the stage where we understand that our planet is limited and that the "good father" who has managed it until now is nothing but a swindler, and that we are all the willing little soldiers of this swindler.

In our current context, where the economic system is inevitably closed, limited by the capacities offered by the planet, logic should make us understand that any enrichment of anyone does indeed create poverty for others.

However, while this has always been very unfair, it has never been as inconsistent and dangerous as it is today. And it will never be those who establish and maintain such a system who will bring about a change of course. Even if some of them express laudable intentions in this regard.

The wealthiest individuals, CEOs, bankers, rentiers, senior executives, and major shareholders have yet to realise that they are sitting on a branch that they are sawing off and that they are very close to the breaking point, even if the branch still appears almost intact to them. It is only a matter of time before it breaks.

Whichever way you look at it, the problem shows that the rich are extremely rich, are getting richer, are increasing their wealth at an ever-faster rate, and are increasingly squandering the common good that is the planet's resources. Meanwhile, the poor are growing in number, are being kept in poverty, and, for some of them, are continuing to become poorer. The richest abuse their power to perpetuate this situation. And politicians let them do it: because they benefit from the financial support of these rich people; and/or to keep their jobs; because they are complacent, or even unaware; or all of the above. But also because

they are powerless in the face of the inextricable complexity of regional, national, international and global legal systems, and also in the face of the total absence of regulation in many areas, which enables the richest to continue as they always have done, and in an increasingly extreme manner. This means that virtually nothing can change their actions and decisions in the short term and that change must come largely from elsewhere.

And the middle class, neither poor nor rich, participates in all this by submitting to the rules dictated by the richest, even though for most individuals, nothing obliges them to do so. But it is very comfortable to enjoy certain advantages and to protect oneself from seeing the consequences that this produces. We deplore injustices, but refuse to admit that we are insidiously participating in them by being complicit with those who initiate them. And since most of the time this happens far away from us, and poverty and hunger do not cause a big stir in the mass media, we content ourselves with feigning indignation at a famine on the other side of the world and building walls and barbed wire fences to keep out the migrants who are evidence of the ills of civilisation that we deny.

As Julien Vidal says in his book (in French): *"Ça va changer avec vous !" (It will change with you)* (2019), Editions Pocket:

> *"The current capitalist model feeds on what is left unsaid, on our weak compromises, our sterile opposition, our passivity, our inconsistencies, our abdications."* [82]

We will return to all this a little later in the chapters on *"Consumer complacency"* and *"The implicit and the explicit"*.

Assessing the damage cannot lead us to find solutions that will prevent it from continuing to occur. It is necessary to look beyond appearances to find what is causing such drifts. Rather than looking to history to explain the reasons for the current situation, I propose a different, more psychological or sociological approach. For, it is not by looking at the past that we can avoid repeating it; it is by looking at the reasons behind our behaviours that we can succeed in transforming them. And in the context of the culture of profit, we still have a lot to discover.

F) THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE LURE OF PROFIT ON MINDSETS

1. Survival or greed

In today's world of work, most jobs do not operate on the basis of the carrot of financial reward, but rather on the stick of financial deprivation. In the sense that, depending on their educational and professional background, most workers do not really choose their job, they take what they are given, without being able to discuss the conditions. And this is even more true for those who have children or other dependents.

As we have seen, lacking money means functioning in survival mode. This generates stress. It forces people to live in the moment without any ability to plan. It stimulates negative emotions and the behaviours that result from them: aggressiveness and violence, depression, inhibition. And it can be compared to a form of deprivation of liberty. Every action and decision is forced to be geared towards survival; and in this sense, there are no real choices available. There are, of course, different degrees of this survival mode: as for example, simply trying to feed oneself, looking for a decent job, or even looking for comfortable accommodation.

Moreover, while the initial motivation for earning money is to survive, the lure of gain quickly appears once survival is assured and a surplus becomes possible. We start by saving: a nest egg for a rainy day. And if the opportunity to increase one's income arises, few people turn it down. This is when the accumulation of goods, spending and increased comfort begin, which quickly becomes the superfluous, then luxury, and in the process, waste. The line between comfort and luxury is not always clear, and many cross it without realising it.
Several factors come into play that push us to seek ever greater wealth.

First of all, when we manage to leave survival mode behind in practical terms, on a psychological level we often retain the same attitudes and behaviours, which create a need to accumulate, to always have reserves, and to never reach satiety. This is a reflexive response to stress, a way of calming our fears. It is not necessary to have experienced precariousness to exhibit such a reflex. The fear of scarcity exists in everyone, but the security of an income can alleviate it, and also, awareness of this fear can enable us to learn to manage it in the absence of threat.

To this tendency to accumulate, both savings and purchases, are grafted the conditioning to consumption through the influences of our environment. Television, advertising, fashion, social media and other online influences, as well as pressure from those around us, among many other factors, guide our choices, shape us and dictate that we buy and spend more and more, and therefore need more and more income to do so. Shopping, buying and owning are considered as "doing ourself some good". Even psychologists can lead us down this path. However, compensating for our fears, shortcomings and frustrations through spending (purchases or entertainment) does not teach us how to manage and go through these emotions, and even prevents us from becoming conscious of them.

Choosing to get away from the highways of consumers, television viewers, social media users, etc. is not necessarily difficult, but it usually involves a whole process to get there, because everything pushes us to remain in the framework, first and foremost the need to remain socially integrated.

And the more we are rooted in this culture, the more dependent we become on it. The survival mode then turns into an addiction. An unconscious addiction, not necessarily powerful, which does not destroy us, even if it prevents us from evolving, but which indirectly destroys everything around us.

Finally, the more we live in opulence, the more the threat to life posed by a lack of money can turn into the threat of losing the privileges or status we have acquired. If we do not take a leap forward in our evolution, we risk both maintaining our survival behaviour despite our newfound wealth and continuing to be driven by greed linked to the fear of losing our privileges.

2. Money corrupts and perverts

And if, in survival mode, our behaviours can be cruel to others, in privilege mode, it can become even more perverse. Because fighting for privileges and becoming greedy to earn more and more makes us leave the world of ethics and enter a world where anything goes. This is not a conscious choice and generally takes root over years or decades, or even several generations.

In the long term, like power, excess money corrupts and perverts. It rots our values and buys our honesty. The richer we are or the more we are paid, the more tempting it becomes to agree to sacrifice our values, to act dishonestly, to lie, etc. And we do so with a clear conscience, accommodating reality, even if it means considering ourselves to be role models, generous, benefactors. And you don't need to have a large surplus of money to enter into this process. In the middle class, we are also affected, on a smaller scale, but affected nonetheless. The wealthiest are therefore a caricature of what wealthy people already practise.

Research on this subject has been conducted in the United States. [83]

Money can buy anything, absolutely anything, even women's bodies (and to a much lesser extent, men's) in order to satisfy urges. And we can therefore expect that the more wealth people have or the more they are paid, the more they are able to disregard their values, honesty and kindness, and thus become capable of the worst.

And in the corporate world, high dividends, sky-high CEO salaries and bonuses are, in a sense, nothing more than forms of bribery made legal by economic rules created by the circle of those who benefit from them. And it is in this context that we are currently discovering all the abuses that are increasingly coming to light.

Since money corrupts in the same way as power, and probably much more so, possessing a great deal of it is not only unfair because it creates poverty, but it is also intrinsically harmful and unhealthy.

It is an unconscious process. It is relatively easy to observe in others, but much more difficult to detect in oneself. It requires real intention, choice, and work on oneself. And the path to achieving this involves leaving denial behind, choosing sobriety, and allowing others to benefit from our money.

3. The race to climb the ladder of wealth

Unfortunately, the problem is not limited to the behaviours of the wealthiest. For, everyone, at their own level on the social ladder, will try to climb to the next level, admiring the exploits of those who are worse off. In this way, it is the wealthiest who lead everyone else in their footsteps, setting a bad example, convinced that they are role models. They are the ones who influence behaviours at all levels below them on the social pyramid. But how does the excesses of a few have such a snowball effect on the rest of the population?

In reality, everyone, at their own level, tries to get as close as possible to the mirage of happiness that wealth represents. Each social level is attracted to the level above it. Added to this is the competition between peers to maintain their rank, and even to do better.

As a result, our individual expenses are partly, if not largely, defined by the expenses of people who are richer than us, because we envy them and want to be like them, to show that we are as close as possible to their status. And as the richest become richer and richer, and the wealth gap widens, this means that this thirst for wealth and higher status is stronger than ever and less likely to be satisfied. This translates into imitation of the behaviours of the wealthiest, and therefore, the higher one climbs the social ladder, the greater the waste and overconsumption.

In more egalitarian societies, the appeal of opulence is therefore less strong, whereas in more unequal societies, competition, and therefore the consumption it generates, is much more pronounced.

Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), an American economist and sociologist, already described this in his *"Theory of the Leisure Class"* (1899), using the term "conspicuous consumption". According to him, while the economy serves in part to meet the needs of the population, it serves above all to satisfy the insatiable desire of the privileged classes to consume and show off. [84]

André Boyer, in his article: *"Le monde selon Veblen: la sur consommation expliquée"* *(The world according to Veblen: overconsumption explained* (2013), puts it this way:

"Veblen acknowledges that part of the production of goods meets real needs, but he notes that in practice, the level of production necessary to meet those needs is quickly reached. Beyond this level, the excess production is driven by the desire to flaunt one's wealth in order to distinguish oneself from others, which constitutes conspicuous consumption and, of course, waste." [85]

The higher one climbs the social ladder, the greater the need to flaunt one's wealth and power. Leisure activities, fashion, appearances, travel and extravagance then become the benchmarks for comparing oneself to others. In rich or emerging countries, the economy no longer serves a useful purpose; it mainly serves the futile desires of a wealthy population. As a result, it contributes to waste, environmental destruction and injustice.
And this way of functioning is somewhat contagious. As the tendency is to imitate those who live better than us (or whom we consider to be so), there is a ripple effect on less affluent sections of society, who will also adopt this conspicuous consumption, but on a smaller scale. And so it is the configuration of society as a whole that is modelled on this pattern, causing our ecological footprint to explode.

In this sense, it is not so much our needs that are causing it to explode, but rather our *"conspicuous consumption"*, taught by advertising, our Western culture, and the wealthiest classes.

Thus, the greater the wealth gap, the more intense the race for money becomes, and the more people are left behind.

4. Consumer complacency

In reality, we all live in a world whose vices we have so thoroughly internalised (unconsciously) that not only do we implicitly accept them, but sometimes we directly support those who exploit them, even using them ourselves with a clear conscience.
As a result, consuming and investing in shares is not considered harmful, and we indulge in it to our heart's content.

In addition, what makes this position easier is that there is always a neighbour or another who do the same or who benefit even more than we do from the system and its excesses. Almost everyone preaches the benefits of material wealth, because it is still considered deserved (at least in the Western world). We prefer to amass, collect and waste carelessly rather than go against the grain and face disapproval, playing the role of grains of sand in this machine that is so attractive with its lights and glitter, but so destructive.

Once we start to be able to afford comfort, then privileges, then, as soon as we have a little more than what we need, we want to have even more. And since we cannot justify in the face of the poorest that we have more, the fact that there are people who have more than us makes it justifiable in our eyes that we ourselves can be richer than others. And so, the richer we become, the more we consider wealth to be acceptable.

And when we complain about what is wrong, we must admit that we ourselves are partly responsible for what is wrong. (See my article *"It's our complacency to the system which allows it to perpetuate"*. [86]
[see Ref A].

5. Violence

It goes without saying that once we consider that any means are acceptable to get rich, raise our status, consume and enjoy ourselves, we can only spend our time elbowing our way through. And while, outside the delinquent sphere and domestic and family violence, the physical violence is less common, the fact remains that the use of psychological violence has become commonplace, and this is all the more so when we are behind a screen and the people on whom we inflict this violence have lost all humanity in our eyes and are nothing more than an outlet for our anger and frustration or a plaything for our sadism.
According to psychologist Christine Calonne, quoted in Céline Biourge's article *"Violences psychologiques : la difficulté pour les victimes de pervers narcissiques de se faire reconnaître" (Psychological violence: the difficulty for victims of narcissistic perverts to be recognised)* in RTBF (2020), psychological violence is probably the result of:

> *"...an increasingly materialistic society where we ultimately view the other as an object of consumption. And so, if the other is an object, we lose empathy for him/her. We lose the ability to feel compassion, or even to want to understand the other. Power relations between people are becoming increasingly important, and therefore so is violence."* [87]

Money, the power it gives, materialism, and the power struggles it engenders will all have the effect of diluting the values and rules of our education and leading us to circumvent, defy, and ignore them. When selfishness crushes conscience, the limits of perversity evaporate. The degree of inhumanity in relationships is increasingly palpable in society.
Violence is evident both in relations between communities (war, terrorism, nationalism, racism, etc.) as in interpersonal relations (aggression, manipulation, mistreatment, neglect). The richer we are, the more selfishness and mistrust increase, and kindness becomes nothing more than a façade.

G) IMPLICIT BELIEFS ABOUT MONEY

The culture in which we live teaches us to consider others in relation to their possessions and signs of wealth or lack thereof. And this culture is transmitted to us through education, teaching, the mass media and the entire cultural, economic and advertising system. But it becomes even more ingrained in our minds through our experiences and conditioning in front of deprivations and the power of money. It is therefore not so much the fact that our parents, teachers or the mass media instil a well-defined course of action in us, but rather the interpretation of all the examples and comments relating to the use of money and our relationship with money that we will encounter throughout our lives that will shape our beliefs.

Beliefs about money are shared by everyone and are rarely questioned. The richest and most powerful people ensure that they are maintained because, on the one hand, it is in their interest and, on the other hand, because, like everyone else, they believe in them, especially since they have often been educated in an environment where these values are juggled as if they were set in stone. They can therefore only deny the logic of reality, unable, in a sense, to access it. Even the most honest people participate in this system and perpetuate it in good faith, through ignorance, submission, conditioning, and/or complacency.

1. Money must be a limited resource

> *"Sometimes I imagine that aliens land on Earth and laugh their heads off when they see humans making laws that aim to deprive their fellow humans of simple tokens – tokens that are symbolic of a concept of their own invention, money, and which therefore, by definition, exist in abundance."* [88]
> Excerpt from Leslie's testimony in the book "Bullshit Jobs - a theory" by David Graeber – Publisher: Simon & Schuster (2019) [89] -

[see Ref 4]

> *"There is no shortage of money. That lie died when governments released $16 trillion to respond to the pandemic."* [90]
> Gabriela Bucher, Executive Director of Oxfam International - in the document already cited *"Ten richest men double their fortunes in pandemic while incomes of 99 percent of humanity fall"*

Money is, after all, merely a human creation. Its limitation generates and perpetuates inequalities in rights and life by making it impossible for a significant portion of the world's population to have sufficient access to it, thus turning the right to a worthy life into a privilege.

The creation of money is not related to the creation of wealth (the production of goods and services). instead, the money created inevitably flows to those who create, manage, own or produce these goods and services. This is somewhat similar to the colonists who appropriated land by hunting, killing or enslaving the indigenous people, and who were then able to enrich themselves by having others work the land or by selling it on. Our mindsets are still modelled on this pattern, even though slavery is now illegal and all land already has an owner. Start-ups and offshoring, for example, operate on the same model. In the first case, a need is created from scratch, and in the second, cheap labour is exploited without having to answer to anyone.

Those who create money (the banks) are those whose mindset is linked to the power of money and the greed for wealth, or who depend on these people; while those who need money are totally subject to the dictates of the former. This explains why inequalities are growing and why the former ignore the needs and rights of the latter to the point of allowing a few million of them to die in poverty each year, while leaving the others to struggle and suffer, completely powerless to change their living conditions. And between the two are those who have left this struggle behind and live in decent conditions while lending a hand to the former to maintain the status quo. This may seem like a caricature, but it is not. I believe that no one (or almost no one) acts with the aim of perpetuating this pattern. However, the richest people genuinely believe that they deserve their place and consider themselves superior to others, to the point where they cannot conceive of sharing their wealth and persist in seeking to become ever richer. Beneath a very civilised exterior (intelligence, knowledge, experience, competence, culture, education, standing), their beliefs trap them in rather archaic mental and behavioural patterns, which force society to function according to their model, preventing it from evolving.

2. You have to work to earn a living

On the other hand, our society persists in believing that in order to be entitled to an income, one must work, except when one is a child, severely disabled, ill, or elderly. When you do not fall into any of these four categories, those in power put as many obstacles as possible in the way of those who do not have access to work and spend enormous amounts of money on an entire administration dedicated to creating obstacles, checking that these obstacles are overcome, and paying civil servants to do "this work". Yet everyone knows that there is not enough work for everyone (according to our culture, because if we took the trouble to stop doing unnecessary work and do the necessary work, sharing it out, everyone would find their place). And in Western countries, if we stopped equivocating and gave an income to those who do not have one, the losses represented by fraudsters would be negligible compared to the administrative machine that consists of trying to control each applicant by suspecting them of fraud; this is perfectly expressed by David Graeber in his book *"Bullshit Jobs - a theory"* – Publisher: Simon & Schuster (2019) [91]:

> *"Thousands of people work in beautiful air-conditioned offices and receive comfortable salaries to ensure that the poor continue to live in shame."* [92]

And if that were to change:

> *"And the small handful of real parasites that remain will not be such a terrible burden, since the amount of work required to ensure the comfort and safety of the population is not so considerable after all. Compulsive workaholics, who cannot help doing more than is necessary, will more than compensate for the inactivity of these few slackers."* [93]
> [see Ref 4]

3. Rich people are happier

> *"Money does not make poor people happy" Coluche*

We all know the saying*, "Money doesn't buy happiness."* And yet no one really applies this maxim, except for nuns and monks who have taken a vow of poverty. Because even if we believe in it as a certain ideal, our actions take no account of it whatsoever.
However, if its almost total absence makes happiness unattainable, the saying is true. Wealth can even contribute to our unhappiness when its influence becomes significant in our lives.

First of all, money often allows us to obtain pleasures, but pleasure is by no means a guarantee of happiness. Happiness consists much more in the ability to give meaning to what we experience and in the ability to accept and overcome adversity than in the ability to grant ourselves material pleasures. Furthermore, the ease that money brings when we have it has taught us to no longer be able to enjoy ourselves without buying something. Money teaches us to behave like laboratory rats that are conditioned to push a button to get their favourite food and lose the ability to seek their food naturally.

Money also allows us to obtain comfort. But behind this apparent comfort lies not only the pleasure of acquisition, but also the pursuit of ease. Comfort and ease are not synonymous. The former allows us to avoid unnecessary fatigue and pain, while the latter spares us effort and difficulty and teaches us laziness and passivity. And, in our eagerness to smooth out the rough edges of life, we exclude its joys and meaning, without necessarily being able to dispense with setbacks. And so we create boredom, weariness and discouragement, coupled with an insatiable thirst for entertainment by partying, letting off steam, letting ourselves go and taking drugs. And by having everything at our fingertips, we lose our creative and memory skills, our flexibility, and even certain intellectual, physical and social abilities. We disconnect from our earthly reality, our true needs and our natural environment.

The meaning of our lives is inversely proportional to the importance we attach to material wealth and signs of wealth.
However, restoring logic, or rather meaning, to our conception of wealth is not as painful as we might imagine; in fact, quite the opposite is true. It allows us to reorient our goals in a more appropriate way.

Apart from the pursuit of pleasure, there is also the pursuit of maintaining privileges. Indeed, while living in poverty and misery is a struggle for survival, having money gives access to privileges. But when we enjoy privileges, we are almost always intrinsically threatened with losing them. And so the more privileges we have, the more we are led to defend them. Becoming wealthy therefore leads to a constant fear of losing one's privileges (the famous withdrawal into oneself), just as being poor means constantly living under the threat of not being able to satisfy one's basic needs. However, the scale of these threats is not comparable.

To be happy, it is therefore necessary to have access to a minimum level of comfort, and also to become capable of letting go of privileges. This requires becoming conscious of all these aspects and assimilating

them in order to put them into practice. It is not a matter of intellectual understanding, but rather psychological understanding.

On the other hand, the possessions or signs of wealth we accumulate do not demonstrate our own worth, nor even our level of happiness. The competition to acquire and maintain status, to shine socially, is a mirage and blinds us to the values of the heart, keeping us in childish behaviours and concerns. Letting go of everything we believed defined us allows us to regain much more psychological comfort.

Finally, material wealth and the pursuit of possessions, like any other pursuit of pleasure, is addictive; this is also inversely proportional to the ability to achieve happiness/be happy. This topic has been covered by the media in relation to the research of American endocrinologist Robert Lustig on this subject [94]
Here is a short and powerful video on the subject published by Brut, entitled *"Plaisirs ≠ bonheur : la théorie scientifique sur le bonheur de Robert Lustig" (Pleasure ≠ happiness: Robert Lustig's scientific theory on happiness)* [95] - [see Ref 6].
According to Robert Lustig:

> *"The pursuit of pleasure hinders the pursuit of happiness."* [96]

4. Wealth must be merited, so, implicitly does the poverty too

Merit is very often mentioned when people become wealthy. Either because we link wealth to hard work, talent, skill or achievement. Or because we link it to a form of heredity. Or even to silence any claims from those who are less affluent.
However, wealth is never deserved. It is not a question of religion or morality, it is a question of logic.
Being rich means taking possession of other people's goods. It works like communicating vessels, but is only noticeable on a large scale. It is much less visible on an individual scale, and when it is, there are usually safeguards such as laws, contracts, borders, etc. So when we accumulate wealth without sharing it, on whatever scale, and even if we do not perceive it in an obvious way, we are plundering entire populations, nature and future generations.

If wealth had to be merited, that would imply that poverty, misery and famine also had to be merited or deserved. Try telling that to entire populations decimated by famine, exploited by corrupt multinationals, victims of disasters, or trapped in armed conflicts.
In a way, we all know this very well. But we prefer to deny it as soon as we benefit from the slightest privilege.

As a reminder, here is a very educational short film by Denis van Waerebeke, written with Sabrina Massen, which leaves no room for doubt. Although it simplifies the situation considerably, it nevertheless highlights many aspects and provides a good framework for understanding: *"How to feed the world"* (2013 - 9'03") [97] - [see Ref 2].

5. You have to work hard to earn a good living

> *"What a person's income reflects is their ability to take possession of a greater or lesser share of what is produced collectively. Even the concrete difficulty of a job has little to do with its remuneration."* [98]
> Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson - *"The Spirit Level - Why Equality is Better for Everyone"* (2010), Penguin Publisher [99] - [see Ref 10]

There is absolutely no correlation between income and the difficulty or strenuousness of a job. The best-paid jobs are, for the most part, by no means the most strenuous. It is the lowest-paid jobs that are almost always the most strenuous. And if people agree to keep them, it is because they know that there is no alternative for them; that without this job, they will no longer have enough to live on. It is therefore much more, based on an implicit threat, that most people work. They do not have the training, skills, experience or abilities to do another job in their circumstances. Or they are unaware that they have them, or that they could acquire them. Or their very situation of survival prevents them from having the time and means to acquire them, and often this is of course a vicious circle, rather than bad luck and ignorance. We are not all born equal in terms of opportunities for training and employment. It is not so much our talents or efforts that are decisive, but our environment, our education and our culture.
Many of the implicit social rules of Western society are immoral, and as long as they remain unspoken, that suits us fine.

And the best-paid jobs do not necessarily carry much greater responsibility, and when they do, those who hold them do not necessarily behave in a very responsible manner, given the number of people who leave these jobs, leaving the company in a difficult position while benefiting from huge bonuses that cannot be considered fair given their size and the total lack of merit they represent. Moreover, their responsibility is diluted by the fact that they can delegate almost all of their work.

The RTBF article *"Coronavirus: pourquoi les "métiers féminins", si essentiels dans la lutte contre le Covid-19 sont-ils sous-valorisés ?" (Coronavirus: why are 'female professions', so essential in the fight against Covid-19, undervalued?)* (2020), by Sarah Heinderyckx, quotes Florence Degavre:

> *"The emergence of Covid-19 in our lives serves as a reminder that there is no link between the social utility of a profession and its level of pay and social recognition."* [100]

This professor of socio-economics and gender studies at UCLouvain is referring here to the care professions, but her analysis also applies to other so-called "feminine" professions.

To better understand the value of work and remuneration, nothing beats reading the fascinating book (already mentioned) *"Bullshit Jobs - a theory"* – Publisher: Simon & Schuster [101] (2019), by anthropologist David Graeber. The author sheds completely new light on the growing and phenomenal amount of useless work done in our society, and on an entire social class, generally well-educated and well-paid, who perform mountains of useless work or supervise the work of others who would work just as well, if not better, without supervision:

> *"... the more beneficial a job is to society, the less likely it is to be highly paid."* [102]*[see Ref 4]*

6. Money inflates on its own

No one expresses it in these terms, but this is nevertheless the logic of the process. We are all capable of logical and coherent reasoning. Yet when it comes to economics, we all obey a tacit principle that money inflates on its own, and that this is ineluctable. This principle is even unstable. Historically, profits were much more moderate and currencies were relatively stable. But in recent decades, the phenomenon has spiralled out of control. And this is not due to a natural phenomenon, but to the will of those who benefit from it and who have the power to decide. Proof of this is that, until recently, savings rates were at rock bottom (in 2019-2020), and governments could even borrow at negative rates, while stock market indices, despite a few hiccups, allowed to continue to enrich with dividends sometimes exceeding 40%. This paradox also highlights the inequality of opportunity to get rich, depending on whether one can afford to be a shareholder or can only fall back on savings.

In a healthy economy, trade should never cause the value of goods, including money, to fluctuate. If shareholders benefit from a 20% or even 40% increase in the value of their shares in a year, it is inevitably because someone else dependent on the functioning of the company has paid the price: the supplier of raw materials, the subcontractor and its workers, the quality of the product offered and therefore the customer who buys it, workers' income or working conditions, the maintenance and administration of the company, taxes, the environment, and very often all of these at once, with knock-on effects that can affect entire populations.

7. The increase in the cost of living, inflation, currency devaluation

We are all familiar with the fact that the value of things, in monetary terms, is constantly increasing, and that, conversely, money loses its value over time. But it is important to note that until the beginning of the last century, the value of money in all currencies remained relatively stable, and then, boosted by the emergence of the stock market, the system went into overdrive – see Thomas Piketty's book*: "Capital in the Twenty-First Century"* (2013) Publisher: Harvard University Press [103] – and that this has continued to worsen as a result of all the decisions taken since then, which have facilitated the enrichment of shareholders, the anonymisation of capital and speculation.

Therefore, if the price of your bread doubles every 15-20 years, it didn't happen randomly, nor to a mathematical law or a law of nature, but to the choices of those who established and developed the economic rules. It is therefore by no means ineluctable.

And since price variability differs between products sold, or between salaries and other incomes, this variability helps to prevent the average citizen from grasping the inconsistency of these developments.

To better understand the drifts that underpin our economy, I suggest you watch the video: *"Money as Debt"* by Paul Grignon, (2008) [104] [see Ref 21].
This video focuses mainly on the creation of money and reveals a number of inconsistencies in how it is managed by banks and governments. Unfortunately, the initial solutions briefly mentioned appear to be based on the same type of reasoning that created the current situation.

However, the video effectively conveys the absurdity of the entire system. In the past, each absurd rule has led to new obstacles, which have been overcome by even more absurd rules. And this remains true today, for example when we look at how the energy crisis of 2022 was created by setting energy prices in an absurd manner, and how attempts are being made to resolve it.

And the conspiracy theories briefly mentioned in the video do not seem really justified to me. Even if we should not minimise the fact that in these spheres of power, there is collusion and sometimes secret and/or implicit agreements to steer regulations in the directions they have chosen. But I do not think that this really happens in an organised way. In these circles, we must not forget that everyone pulls the strings for their own interests, and that setting up an organisation for the benefit of all its members, sufficiently well organised to remain secret and act on a global scale, is probably beyond their psychological capabilities. For, in my opinion, while they are capable of reaching certain agreements to achieve defined common goals, they are absolutely incapable of solidarity on a large scale through genuine collaboration, while managing to keep it all secret. We saw this with the creation of COVID vaccines. Hundreds of initiatives emerged, and it was those with the most money, power and influence in the most prominent positions, with the most effective lobbies, and probably with the least honesty and a fair amount of manipulation, who shared the biggest slices of the pie. But nothing could have been written in advance, as claimed by certain conspiracy theories which, in hindsight, did not hold water in this scenario.

See also another beautiful illustration, shorter and more symbolic, but very effective: *"The Monkey Business: A Tale of Market Manipulation"* [see Ref 20]. [105]
A kind of metaphor for our economic, political and financial system. Still relevant today, now more than ever.

8. Being rich does not harm anyone

Most people would agree with the idea that being rich does not harm anyone, and some of them also think that if you are poor, it is because you are lazy, because you are not talented, or because you are "unlucky".

However, while getting rich is perfectly legal, it is certainly not moral. And the facts before our eyes are increasingly convincing in helping us understand this. Any creation of material wealth involves the creation of poverty and/or the destruction of the environment.

Because money that grows on its own in the form of shares is always linked, directly or indirectly, to exploitation, injustice and impoverishment elsewhere, or, on an environmental level, to waste, pollution and destruction.
In the global economy, everything is interdependent.

Here is an overview, by way of example, of some of the damage caused by this system from which we benefit, as revealed by the media in recent years:

- In order for our clothes to be cheaper than our food, women have to work in inhumane and dangerous conditions for unscrupulous companies in the least developed countries.

- In order for us to use our smartphones, tablets and laptops, wars are being waged in African countries and children are being exploited in mines.

- Cigarette manufacturers have manipulated research on the effects of tobacco, sending millions of people to their deaths, for the sole purpose of making a profit and perpetuating their business. And this continues today.

- The same applies to glyphosate, asbestos, certain pharmaceutical products, the soft drinks industry, the automotive industry and the oil industry, to name the most well-known cases. Intellectual property, patents and copyright all work in this way.

While the current banking, stock market and economic system is psychologically incredibly sophisticated in its manipulation of the masses and exploitation of our most primal drives, it is rationally completely incoherent and morally indefensible given its consequences for humans and the environment, and therefore for the ability to survive on the planet.

> A less direct and smaller-scale example of the enrichment of some at the expense of others, but one that is very representative, even caricatural, of the consequences of a certain commercial logic and the morality that underpins it, is the existence of lotteries and casinos. This is no longer strictly speaking the trade of money, but rather games involving money. Games that are regulated by law. Loss is the rule and winning is the exception; by attempting to define the maximum possible losses, the legislator effectively legalises the very principle of gambling. And then fills its pockets by taxing the profits. However, statistics show that a significant number of players are banned from gambling due to debt or addiction. Some of these people need to be taken care of by associations, psychological services in hospitals, or even debt counsellors. This number – for Belgium – varies

from year to year, between 120,000 and 280,000 (out of a population of just over 11 million) according to reports from the Belgian Gaming Commission in recent years – 2016 [106] and 2022 [107]. Legislation therefore protects the gambling industry at the expense of the mental and financial health of a significant percentage of the population (more than 1% in Belgium, for example) and the consequences this has on those around them.

As all the ingredients of the economic and financial system in which we live are interdependent, this means that benefiting from it constitutes active participation in that system, whether by enriching ourselves or by being able to consume at a lower cost.

However, there are three differences between the very rich and the middle class: the degree of participation, the power that this can confer, and the deterioration of moral values that this will entail. But the harmfulness of the principle applies to everyone.

And although wealth is almost never explicitly condemned, we all know how immoral it is. Another example that illustrates this is the game of Monopoly. It perfectly illustrates how implicit values related to money are integrated into our culture.
In the rules of Monopoly, you can buy a hotel for, say, 5,000 currency units on the main street of the capital, and then sell it for 25,000 currency units to another player. In the competitive spirit of the game, you will certainly feel a real sense of pleasure at having enriched yourself and cheated the other player. But you also have a sense of the immorality of the act, especially if you win the game by bankrupting everyone else.
The rules of Monopoly are nothing more and nothing less than those of our real economy, simplified. The latter has become a complete caricature of the game that inspired it, given the scale at which it is played.

9. In economics, what is legal is moral.

Stealing from the till is forbidden, but plundering entire populations remains, despite everything, perfectly legal and often tolerated.

We are no longer in an era of legally accepted colonialism, except in certain parts of the world. However, the mentality has remained fairly similar. Through neocolonialism, some continue to help themselves to other countries, exploiting local populations, stealing their resources to export them to the North, and sometimes organising wars, putting children to work, polluting, or sending them entire cargo ships full of our waste, etc. And all this with the approval of the authorities in the recipient countries and the complacency of the local authorities. Added to this are widespread relocations, or companies that have no qualms about the serious harm caused by their activities, whether to their own workers, the environment, or their customers.
Yet, to this day, those who are at the source of all these drifts are the same people we find in think tanks, who are favoured by banks, obtain tax breaks, play with tax havens, are sometimes even integrated into the political landscape, and maintain a remarkable aura in the media world. And even when the mass media finally denounce some of the injustices for which they are responsible, this generally does not even lead to a drop in sales or legal problems that directly threaten them, with a few exceptions.
Some of the biggest billionaires, for example, manage to evade tax simply by claiming investment losses. [108]

In this context, macroeconomic mechanisms encourage a lack of accountability. Responsibility is shared at all levels of the hierarchy in multinationals, and by intermediaries, branches and subcontractors in different countries; everyone, at their own level, allows themselves slight moral transgressions, and the combination of all these bending of the rules often produces monsters that no one can stop.

Moreover, the larger the companies, the more those at the top are able to absolve themselves of responsibility. This is true in relation to their workers, the environment, the quality of what they produce, the harm caused by their production (to their customers), and the authorities of the countries in which they operate. They are almost completely free to act as they please. And governments are willing to bow down to them in the hope of creating jobs in their territory, or maintaining those same jobs. Customers are generally oblivious to this. As long as they can enjoy what they buy at a good price, they turn a blind eye. And even in some cases, if they are aware of the accumulation of abuses, they continue to buy, as long as it is not their health, their wallet or their survival that is at stake. GAFAM is one of the most striking examples of this. Their multiple drifts are reported in the news almost daily, and yet few people seek to distance themselves from them.

10. Economics is a complex science – we must trust the experts

Every time I read an article or a book that deals with the current economic system or finance, I feel stupid, like I don't understand anything, like I've lost my memory. I feel a kind of malaise, and mixed in with that is indignation. But this indignation is too mixed with doubt. Since I don't understand anything, it must surely be unjustified.

At the same time, I know I'm not stupid. I also know that when I'm being manipulated, I feel the same malaise mixed with indignation.
And then I also know that economists – even if they are still in the minority – denounce the absurdities of our current economic and financial system. And there are more and more articles and books denouncing and explaining all these dysfunctions.

However, mainstream information, the most common type of information conveyed by most mass media, economists and politicians, constantly gives us reasons to believe that 'the economy is complicated'; while also conveying the idea that it is so complicated and unpredictable that it justifies all the setbacks, losses, bankruptcies and injustices, which are, after all, only side effects, collateral damage. And that, therefore, it is up to the experts to take responsibility for managing it all.

And it works perfectly. The average persons don't understand any of it, are told that it's complicated but logical, even scientific, and accept it, submitting to the rules even when they are totally detrimental to them.

However, while some of the rules used in our economy are indeed logical, the majority of them are completely absurd. And it is precisely the presence of a degree of logic that makes it difficult to denounce the absurdity and, above all, the injustice of the entire system.

For, just because there are more than 8 billion of us, and there are millions of different resources to manage, and setting up and running all of this can become very complex, does not mean that the basic equations are complex. It is in fact because all these processes do not really work publicly and there are legal loopholes in many situations that all kinds of abuse are possible and those who pull the strings try to make us believe that a healthy economy is not possible.
To better understand the basic principles on which our economic system operates, I suggest two references: first, reading the fable *"The money myth exploded"* by Louis Even (1936) [109] - [see Ref 19] , and secondly, the video *"Money Debt"*, already mentioned [110] - [see Ref 21.
And if you want more than just these simplifications, I suggest the 1h30 interview (in French) by Thinkerview in 2019 with Gaël Giraud, a Jesuit priest, former financier, and currently (among other things) an economist, author, and research director at the CNRS. Among other roles, he has also been chief executive of the Agence Française de Développement (a non-profit public bank that finances development

projects in southern countries). In the interview, he explains in a very concise and eloquent manner a mountain of economic and financial concepts that provide an insight into the total absurdity of the current economic and financial world and the total impotence of the political world held hostage, even if he does not express it in these terms at all. [111] - [see Ref 30].

Our economic system is anything but natural. It was built in an anarchic manner. Its complexity, which makes it opaque to the uninitiated, is neither truly intentional nor truly random.
Its rules are anything but truly consistent, that is to say, truly adapted to human and environmental reality.
They have accumulated over the years, decades and centuries, piecemeal by some and others, in most cases with personal interests for those who developed them or for the class they represented. Sometimes conflicting interests have led to the creation of more and more sub-rules, allowing those who initiated them to avoid financial losses. And this has rarely been done for the common good, even when the official intentions were declared as such. Citizens, voters, workers, and even savers have always been excluded from these decisions. Even elected officials were sometimes excluded from decisions, yet had to subsequently use taxpayers' money to repair the damage caused by certain companies or banks.

All these economic rules were therefore created from scratch by a caste of men, not to adapt to reality, but to make reality serve them as if they had the power to shape it to their desires. And now, reality – nature, the environment, humans – is calling us to order.

Here is how Vandana Shiva comments on this in her book *"Oneness vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom"* (2019) - New Internationalist Publications Ltd Publisher [112] [see Ref 39] :

> *"Yesterday as today, the super-rich use governments to design laws and regulations that allow them to accumulate wealth ad libitum. Yesterday as today, they create monopolies by annexing common goods and killing competition."*

Or

> *"Thanks to the rules of the game that they themselves set, wealthy business leaders transfer entire sections of the economy into the hands of the private sector. The private sector then uses its power to circumvent governments, corrupt them or buy democracy.*
>
> *...*
>
> *In some cases, 1% of the population uses its wealth to buy institutions, shape global policy and distort public priorities without being accountable or subject to democratic scrutiny. The very fact that this 1% controls the wealth of the remaining 99% is indicative of the disintegration of democracy and justice."* [113]

Vandana Shiva, also in her book, discusses the stranglehold of economic powers on governance and democracy:

> *"Representative democracy 'of the people, by the people, for the people' is rapidly turning into a democracy 'of corporations, by corporations, for corporations'. Worse still, the concentration of economic power in the hands of a small group of unelected and unaccountable individuals leads to the exercise of de facto political power that influences governments, laws and decision-making and shapes the future of our food, our health and our planet."* [114]

Our states and all transnational organisations have adapted their rules to allow those at the top of the wealth pyramid to continue squandering the common good while leaving crumbs for those at the bottom of the pyramid (the people they exploit and keep in ignorance), and enough comfort and complacent benefits to those on the floors below them, so that they agree to keep them at the top.

Our economic system is also, directly or indirectly, responsible for all the drifts on the planet – from which we cannot escape. Because it promotes wars in all parts of the world, it is of course responsible for global warming, the reduction of biodiversity, and the pollution of land, air and water – the oceans are overflowing with rubbish. It is responsible for the depletion of a large part of our natural resources. Some cities are already experiencing water shortages, and peak temperatures during heatwaves are already reaching survival limits in several places around the globe. Droughts and fires are affecting more and more areas, as are increasingly frequent and devastating floods. We have thus created the unintended but very real and increasingly likely conditions for a universal collective suicide, which I still hope we can escape.

When a system reaches such unimaginable extremes, it is high time to stop contenting ourselves with saying that it is complicated, and to take action to try to save what can still be saved.
When the rules of the game are absurd and unfair, the key is not violence or disobedience to the rules. The key is to get out of the game as quickly as possible.

11. It is politicians who hold the power

In this perverse system that allows the richest to set the rules, politicians do not have the power that we think we delegate to them. They are either involved in the drifts themselves, sitting on various corporate boards and participating in the same think tanks, and therefore push for legislation that benefits profit. And when they are not directly involved, they are generally bound hand and foot by the situation, because if they try to take back control, companies immediately threaten to relocate, leave the country or restructure and lay off staff en masse. It is therefore the harmful economic system that dictates a large part of our laws. And that's not to mention the fact that elected officials are under the massive influence of lobbies, most of which defend the interests of large companies and therefore financial interests.

And citizens generally stand by helplessly. Either they do not understand and continue to trust the authorities, or in any case, in the vast majority of cases, they remain passive in the face of the situation, especially when they can reap some benefits from it. Or they rebel, oppose, try to curb drifts, require reforms, propose alternatives, but with so little result that the energy invested in the action is almost completely wasted. And yet the power is in their hands if they discover how to exercise it.

First of all, it is necessary to realise that, despite enormous cultural differences, if we look more closely, humans all have the same needs. It is the way in which these needs are met that varies, but not as much as we might imagine.
On the other hand, there are more than 8 billion (8,000,000,000) of us for just a few hundred thousand political representatives and only a few thousand (x,000) ministers (or equivalent); that is (very roughly) one minister (or equivalent) for about 1 million people.
However, in today's society, and on a global level, machismo is everywhere, as is the thirst for profit, and ecology is nowhere (or almost nowhere), except among indigenous peoples. Awareness of this state of affairs is growing worldwide.
Even governments, despite friction on all sides, are increasingly aware that the environmental issue is becoming urgent and that we all share it. And action will soon follow. However, the slowness of awareness and decision-making remains distressing.
And if we realise that we are on an upward curve in terms of the ongoing ecological disaster, we can already see that the curve is no longer horizontal at all, and that in the coming months and years it will approach the vertical. In this context, the speed of decisions and changes will eventually become rapid, in line with the scale of the crises that will accumulate and even combine. But political action will always remain some steps behind what needed is.
And in this sense, it is in the interest of every citizen (every small pawn among the 8 billion, compared to the few thousand who are dragging their feet) to act ahead of the decision-makers, not only to

compensate for their delay in decision-making, but also to bring them to these decisions more quickly. Because, except for a few decisions taken under pressure from demonstrations, strikes, boycotts and other rather rebellious acts, politicians generally simply follow the flow, the masses or the manipulation of lobbies. Yet the flow, the masses, is us. Therefore, the solutions consist of multiplying all ideas and initiatives and doing our part, rather than fighting against what does not work.

Cacophonous tower

> *"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the old one obsolete."*
> Buckminster Fuller

Our economic system resembles a tower built anarchically.

This tower can only collapse in the long run. Until now, we have been content to continue adding pieces on top of each other. The top of the tower has already collapsed several times, and we have narrowly avoided the worst. But as long as we continue to build on this unstable pile, we are only increasing the chances of it all collapsing. Logic dictates that, until now, the surfaces on which the pieces are placed have been sufficient to support the weight of the pieces above and maintain balance.
We do not have the power to deconstruct the tower or blow it up (because we do not yet have a sufficiently viable alternative system, nor do we have a planet B). However, we each have the power to participate in the construction of a solid, stable and balanced tower next to it, by gradually divesting the weight that is in each element of the old tower. The anarchic tower will survive for some time, without necessarily collapsing. But injustices will diminish.

This will be developed in the second part of the chapter on the pan balance.

12. Growth is good for the economy

All the drifts in our society, without exception, such as inflation, rising interest rates and dividends, multinationals and offshoring, tax evasion, pollution, consumerism, planned obsolescence, waste, speculation, ubiquitous advertising, etc. and hundreds more - are linked in one way or another to the pursuit of growth.
Yet growth is a snake that bites its own tail. The more growth there is, the more it is felt to be necessary, and the more disastrous its indirect effects are.

a - Logarithmic effect of growth

"The greatest shortcoming of the human race is our inability to understand the exponential function."
Albert Bartlett, physicist

"Anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever (infinitely) in a finite world is either a madman or an economist."
Kenneth Boulding, economist

Let us first try to truly understand the concept of growth outside the specific context of economics, without having to resort to complicated mathematical reasoning. For, without this understanding, it is impossible to grasp the danger posed by the choice of economic growth.
Here is an excerpt from a lecture by the late Dr. Albert Bartlett, when he was a professor of physics at the University of Colorado, on the topic of *"Arithmetic, Population and Energy" (2012)* [115] *- [see Ref 26].*

In this excerpt, Dr. Albert Bartlett attempts to make tangible the effect of growth in the context of oil exploitation and consumption, as well as population growth. Here is what he says:

"...let's look now at what happens when we have this kind of steady growth in a finite environment.

Bacteria grow by doubling. One bacterium divides to become two, the two divide to become 4, the 4 become 8, 16 and so on. Suppose we had bacteria that doubled in number this way every minute. Suppose we put one of these bacteria into an empty bottle at 11:00 in the morning, and then observe that the bottle is full at 12:00 noon. There's our case of just ordinary steady growth: it has a doubling time of one minute, it's in the finite environment of one bottle.

I want to ask you three questions. Number one: at what time was the bottle half full? Well, would you believe 11:59, one minute before 12:00? Because they double in number every minute.

And the second question: if you were an average bacterium in that bottle, at what time would you first realise you were running of space? Well, let's just look at the last minutes in the bottle. At 12:00 noon, it's full; one minute before, it's half full; 2 minutes before, it's a quarter full; then an 1?8th; then a 1?16th. Let me ask you, at 5 minutes before 12:00, when the bottle is only 3% full and is 97% open space just yearning for development, how many of you would realise there's a problem?

Now, in the ongoing controversy over growth in Boulder, someone wrote to the newspaper some years ago and said "Look, there's no problem with population growth in Boulder, because," the writer said, "we have fifteen times as much open space as we've already used." So let me ask you, what time was it in Boulder when the open space was fifteen times the amount of space we'd already used? The answer is, it was four minutes before 12:00 in Boulder Valley. Well, suppose that

at 2 minutes before 12:00, some of the bacteria realise they're running out of space, so they launch a great search for new bottles. They search offshore on the outer continental shelf and in the overthrust belt and in the Arctic, and they find three new bottles. Now that's an incredible discovery, that's three times the total amount of resource they ever knew about before. They now have four bottles, before their discovery, there was only one. Now surely this will give them a sustainable society, won't it?

You know what the third question is: how long can the growth continue as a result of this magnificent discovery? Well, look at the score: at 12:00 noon, one bottle is filled, there are three to go; 12:01, two bottles are filled, there are two to go; and at 12:02, all four are filled and that's the end of the line.

Now, you don't need any more arithmetic than this to evaluate the absolutely contradictory statements that we've all heard and read from experts who tell us in one breath we can go on increasing our rates of consumption of fossil fuels, in the next breath they say 'Don't worry, we will always be able to make the discoveries of new resources that we need to meet the requirements of that growth.' "

In his lecture, Dr Bartlett also mentions figures concerning the potential growth of his city, Boulder, if it were to be stimulated at 5% per annum (which is what the city's political representatives wanted at one time).
It is important to note that, over the course of a lifetime (80 years), such growth – 5% – would lead to a more than 50-fold increase in the city's population. You can therefore imagine what economic growth of the same magnitude would mean for the depletion of the Earth's resources within a single generation. Or what dividends of the same size as capital growth would mean. For a 20% dividend repeated over 80 years, the initial amount would be multiplied by more than 2 million! Yet such dividends are indeed commonplace today.

The entire conference is available on video. [116] - [see Ref 26].
The entire course provides a better understanding of the exponential function through numerous examples that help to grasp its reality.

It seems that most of our elected representatives are completely unaware of the magnitude of the consequences of "growth". Because knowing this means understanding the suicidal nature of growth, both in terms of economic growth and population growth, which are so dear to their hearts.

Nicolas Hulot says this:

"Growth is a medicine that kills."

Equally interesting is the following video (2'21") which explains how the speed of COVID-19 transmission is calculated (at the start of the epidemic, as subsequent variants are even more contagious); this helps us to better understand the need to comply with the social distancing measures that were recommended or imposed by the authorities in most countries. [see Ref 31]

"With normal flu, if I catch it, I will infect an average of 1.3 to 1.4 people... if such a division existed. And if those 1.3 to 1.4 people pass it on to others, that's the second time the flu has been transmitted. When that happens 10 times, I will have been responsible for 14 cases of flu (1.3 to the power of 10). This virus (the coronavirus) is very, very infectious, meaning that each person passes it on to 3 other people (on average). That doesn't seem so different. But if each of the 3 passes it on to 3 others, and this happens 10 times, I will have been responsible for infecting 59,000 people (3 to the power of 10). [117]

The contagion as explained here, teaches us, through experience, about the exponential function, which is comparable for economic growth and population growth.

With a planet of limited resources, the pursuit of continuous growth – both economic and demographic – can be compared, over a period of several decades, to collective suicide: annual growth of 3% over 80 years is equivalent to a tenfold increase in the base amount, whether we are talking about population, profit or production, yet we are already suffocating in all these areas.

b - Ecological footprint and overshoot day

The ecological footprint measures the amount of bio-productive land area needed to produce the goods and services we consume and absorb the waste we produce. It therefore allows us to measure the pressure humans exert on nature.

Overshoot Day, on the other hand, corresponds to the day and month of the year when humanity is estimated to have consumed all the resources that the planet is capable of regenerating in a year. After this date, humanity irreversibly draws on the Earth's non-renewable reserves (on a human timescale).
Both concepts were created by the Global Footprint Network.

Here are several sources of information about Earth Overshoot Day and the ecological footprint:
Earth Overshoot Day in Wikipedia [118],
RTBF article on Earth Overshoot Day (in French) [119],
Overshoot Day official website [120],
Earth Overshoot Day by country (see chart) [121],
RTBF article on Earth Overshoot Day for Belgium (in French) [122],
Footprint Network official website [123],
RTBF article on Earth Overshoot Day in Europe (in French) [124].

To better understand the link between economic growth, population growth, and the role that each of us plays in Western countries, whose ecological footprint far exceeds that of all other countries in the world, it is interesting to look at the date of Earth Overshoot Day. For 2019, this date was estimated to be 29 July globally and 10 May in Europe. Each year, Earth Overshoot Day occurs a few days or weeks earlier than the previous year. At a more local level, for Belgium for example, this date fell on 6 April 2019, 30 March for 2021, and 26 March for 2023. This means that, in Belgium, around three quarters of what we consume today is being stolen from future generations. And this phenomenon can only accelerate over time. It also means that the bottle is more than half full and that we have already passed 11:59 p.m.

The Earth Overshoot Day website provides an illustration of the overshoot day by country for the current year [125]:
If you scroll down the page, you will find the dates for each country. Luxembourg and Qatar reach their overshoot date before 15 February (in 2023). Most European countries are between March and May.

And to better understand the significance of the advancement of this overshoot date globally, year after year, here is another website offering a diagram from the Global Footprint Network that shows the chronological progression of this date. [126]

We are rarely conscious of it, but what we consume on a daily basis requires far more resources than we can imagine. This is the case with steak, for example, which requires around 16,000 litres of water per kilo to be "produced".

Similarly, cotton requires enormous amounts of water for its production. A pair of cotton jeans, for instance, requires around 7,500 litres of water for cotton production [127], not to mention the pollution caused by pesticides. Despite accounting for just 2.4% of the world's arable land, cotton production accounts for a quarter of the pesticides sold globally [128].
We also have a responsibility when it comes to deforestation in the Amazon and in Southeast Asian countries. When we consume coffee, soy-based products or palm oil, if they do not come from fair trade sources, it is extremely likely that they have been produced on land that was cleared after the forest was destroyed. [129] [130]
All our consumption can be questioned in this way. Whether it be transport, pollution, water use, fossil fuels, resource scarcity or biodiversity loss, every product consumed by us as individuals contributes to a little more destruction of the environment. Consuming ethically, sustainably, organically, locally and fairly will reduce this contribution, but reducing our consumption remains the best way to reduce our ecological footprint.

Furthermore, we do not consume the totality of what makes up our ecological footprint. For example, with regard to food: Marc Sautelet (ambassador for the *Zero Waste Belgium* association) stated in an RTBF article (by A.V., 2018), which made it its headline:

> *"One third of food is thrown away. If food waste were a country, it would be the third largest emitter of CO2 after the United States and China."* [131]

According to a UN report published on 5 March 2021, food waste accounted for 17% of all food production worldwide in 2019 and could therefore feed the 690 million people affected by hunger. [132]
The WWF estimates that this waste will reach 40% in 2022. According to their report *"Europe is devouring the planet"*

> *"Up to 40% of the food produced worldwide is never consumed."* [133]

Similarly, half of what is in our cupboards is never used or very rarely used. It could be shared, or simply never produced.

With regard to clothing, the RTBF article *"Quatre cinquièmes des vêtements mis sur le marché sont jetés ou brûlés" (Four-fifths of clothing placed on the market is thrown away or burned)* (2019) by A. L. with M. Paquay quotes the following:

> *"Every year on the European market, five million tonnes of textiles are put on the market and four million tonnes of textiles are thrown away, sent to landfill or incinerated."* [134]

By continuing to draw on our reserves in this way, we will eventually make it impossible to replenish them in the short term. This is all the more true when we take demographics into account. For, if we continue to reproduce at the current rate, the population will have doubled in 40 years.

And that's without even considering the consequences for the survival of human populations.
Just as poverty kills millions of people every year, our obvious incompetences in managing the environment are not outdone. The Belga Agency article *"Plus de 90 organisations demandent à l'ONU que le "droit à une planète saine" soit reconnu comme droit universel" (More than 90 organisations call on the UN to recognise the 'right to a healthy planet' as a universal right)* (2020) reports that:

> *"According to figures from the World Health Organisation (WHO), 23% of global deaths are linked to damage and destruction of the natural environment, while hundreds of millions of people suffer from diseases related to an unhealthy and unnatural environment."* [135]

The facts are there, the figures are known, but we persist in denying them in our daily actions and at all levels of society management. A minority is nevertheless managing to make progress in legislation and in

production and recycling systems, etc. But factually, Earth Overshoot Day continues to arrive a few days earlier each year than the previous year. This means that the efforts made are not even succeeding in reducing or stabilising humanity's ecological footprint. The problem is getting worse and even accelerating.

In 2020, the presence of COVID-19 led to a delay in Earth Overshoot Day. It was calculated to be 22 August (globally), whereas in 2019 it was 29 July. [136]
In this sense, the pandemic has shown us the way forward.

c - Demography

The world's population has also grown exponentially over the past century, and despite a slowdown in growth at present, we passed the 8 billion mark in November 2022. However, we are failing to manage our survival and that of our environment properly, and are squandering it at an ever-increasing rate.

Here is an illustration that allows to visualise the exponential nature of growth, this time in terms of demography, showing population growth on a historical scale of several thousand years. This graph comes from a richly illustrated and documented article. I strongly recommend that you take a look at it. It offers an impressive number of diagrams and charts of all kinds that are highly representative of all aspects of global population growth.

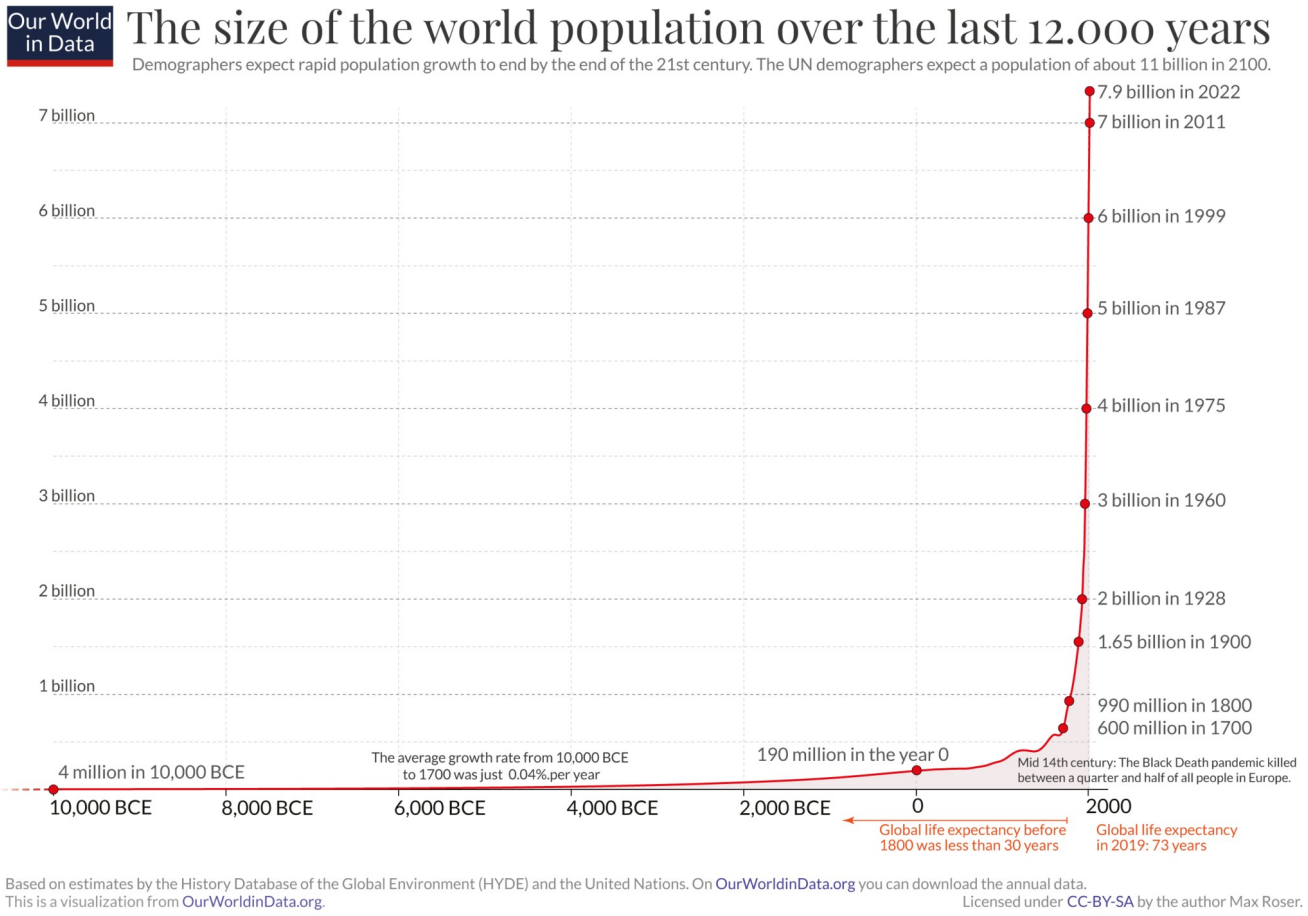


Diagram taken from the "World Population Growth" report – (updated 2023) authors: Max Roser, Hannah Ritchie, Esteban Ortiz-Ospina and Lucas Rodés-Guirao [137]
published on the website https://ourworldindata.org/ [see Ref 32].

The combination of economic growth and rapid population growth are two sides of the same coin. Favouring large families in a world where the more we are, the less chance we have of survival, is a great delusion. This is because the logarithmic aspect of growth explained above also applies to population growth. As already mentioned, at the current rate of growth, the world's population would double in the next 40 years.

It is therefore urgent to change policies that favour population growth. Claiming that reproduction is natural and that we must ensure that the age pyramid is respected leads us just as much to disaster as the pursuit of economic growth. The fear of a reversal of the age pyramid, which would force the younger segment of the population to support a much larger inactive elderly population in need of care, is probably justified. But it would be better to start planning how to manage this phenomenon than to find ourselves on a planet where the survival of all will simply be compromised in the relatively short term.

In this context, as with the absurdity of the economic system as it currently operates, seeking to increase our population is akin to preparing for our disappearance, whereas reversing the age pyramid slightly with an average reproduction rate of between 1 and 2 per couple could be a more appropriate approach to survival.

If we take this reasoning a step further, and are aware that those who understand it are in the minority, and that there will always be a majority of people who will resist this idea, it becomes clear that every person of reproductive age who understands this reasoning would be well advised to refuse to reproduce, knowing that millions of others around the world are still having babies at an accelerated rate. This is even more relevant in Western countries, where the ecological footprint is far greater than in most other countries.
This topic was addressed in the article *"The climate mitigation gap: education and government recommendations miss the most effective individual actions"* by Seth Wynes and Kimberly A Nicholas (2017) published in *Environmental Research Letters.* [138] According to this article, in the current context, choosing to have one less child has an effect nearly 10 times greater on an individual's ecological footprint than all other efforts combined (10 times corresponding to the ecological footprint benchmark for the USA).
I used the same reference when elaborating on the concept in my article: *"Ecological footprint and passive violence"* (2021) [139] - [see Ref C].

An imbalance will inevitably arise in countries where the age pyramid is reversing, and it is then that we will understand that welcoming migrants en masse is, despite the enormous challenges this poses for migrant populations, an advantage for host populations, provided that a programme is developed to welcome them with dignity and give them the opportunity to integrate harmoniously. This has been attempted, for example, in the village of Riace in Italy, as explained on the Wikipedia page on this subject. [140]

Another essential way to reduce the birth rate is to eliminate social inequalities. According to the RTBF article *"Huit milliards d'humains sur Terre en novembre 2022 : la justice reproductive, une solution face à la surpopulation ? " (Eight billion humans on Earth in November 2022: reproductive justice, a solution to overpopulation?)* (2022):

> *"Demographic and public health sciences are very clear on this point: reducing inequalities, ensuring solidarity and security of existence for as many people as possible is the surest way to lower the fertility rate." Florence Caeymaex* [141]

H) THE MAIN VEHICLES OF THE CULTURE OF PROFIT

Money and profit are, of course, not the only factors that influence our culture. But they still play an essential role in a world still dominated by men, where power games are the norm and the Cartesian mind is the benchmark. These themes will be discussed further below.
To move towards a new paradigm, we will need to question this entire framework. And to do so, we will need to bring to light everything that we accept as self-evident, yet which is neither natural, fair, nor even desirable.
The main vehicles of the culture of profit are advertising and mass media: information media and entertainment media; of which television and the internet exert a dominant hold, with the particular role of social networks which, under an apparent freedom of operation for their members, are in fact much more networks of influence, also based on advertising as well as on the manipulation of personal data, always within the framework of a search for profit.

1. Advertising

It is implicitly and practically accepted that advertising can lie, manipulate, drain our time and steal from us. It is permitted and encouraged, even in public service media, justified by audience ratings.

However, advertising, as we know it today on a massive scale, distracts us from our needs and manages to create false needs from scratch, stimulating our unconscious impulses and even creating addictions (cigarettes, alcohol, food, sweets, sex, shopping, the search for recognition, status, etc.). Few people question its validity, nor do they question the fact that it has become personalised. It is even generally implied that the personalisation of advertising is to the advantage of those who are tracked in all their online activities, when in fact it is the manipulation to which they are subjected that is being personalised, making it massively more effective. If advertising were truly informative, it would not be paid for by brands, and it would be presented in a neutral manner with sales arguments, as in consumer information magazines that compare brands.

However, the majority of what is currently produced should not be, because it is not useful and is often, in one way or another, very harmful. But advertising, quite legally, leads us to believe that what we buy under its influence is truly useful.

Advertising companies are the last ones that could influence a return to greater ethics, since their goal is infinite growth, infinite production and infinite enrichment.

2. The news media

Despite each media outlet having its own editorial line, there is often ambiguity in the news they report, depending on the differences in the information they provide, when these are contradictory or incompatible. Very often, two parallel worlds coexist. On the one hand, the information content implicitly supports consumerism, growth, profit and other excesses, and on the other, these same facts are denounced in slightly different contexts, or by presenting alternatives as solutions to these drifts.

So, on the one hand, they are publishing or broadcasting reports on stock market quotas and growth statistics, considered encouraging when high, worrying when stagnant; or they tell us about the success of the latest motor show; they make their best to make us enthralled by the advantages of the latest innovations in home automation; or they are talking about other events modelled on the practice of energy waste, the pursuit of profit, etc. And for certain types of information, when economic and financial figures

are mentioned, they are most often decoupled from their consequences. Journalists express themselves as if, for the sake of neutrality or objectivity, business, profit and commerce must remain confined to the realm of figures, statistics and mathematics in order to remain consistent. Or else, they are communicated to us as a mirror image of the successes they represent, far removed from the grim realities that made them possible. This is similar to a certain practice in medicine, when it confines itself to making diagnoses based on the results of X-rays, scans and other laboratory figures, without taking into account the social, professional and psychological situation of patients.

On the other hand, in the same newspaper, we may be told, for example, about Earth Overshoot Day, including the catastrophic consequences it represents; we may be presented with new alternative economic practices; we may hear about cases published by whistleblowers.

All this is mixed in with disasters, war or court reports, sports results, and the latest show business events. This information is given to us in bulk, without any real context, and apparently without even noticing that there are contradictions between them. And to justify this, we are told that there is a concern for neutrality.

This double talk is common and apparently goes unnoticed by the journalists who present it, or is ignored or even denied. Because, while we can boast of wanting to publish all opinions, presenting them as external to journalistic work, certain comments by journalists themselves, accompanying the news items, show that journalists simply contradict each other, even within a single editorial office. And so a clear distinction is not always made between facts and opinions. This fuels confusion among the public. For many messages are then implicitly integrated.

However, as long as they try to play both ends against the middle, the media will continue to feed us with information inspired by economic and political powers and imposed by the dictates of audience ratings, which are themselves directly linked to advertising revenue, while at the same time trying to appear objective by presenting us with a few aspects of reality that are more accurate.

> Note: ratings do not reflect the interests and voluntary choices of viewers, but rather their level of fatigue, or even overwork and therefore passivity, their tendency to be easily influenced or even manipulated, their impulsiveness, their desire for ease, their automatic responses, their conditioning, their loyalty, their level of credulity, their obedience to conform to a programme established for them, etc. What's more, readers, listeners and viewers are forced to take what they are given. For, even if they are multilingual and have dozens of channels to choose from, in terms of television, they are limited to a few options (depending on their actual interests and mood on any given day), whereas the existing potential could offer millions (which can be found online or in physical formats such as video, audio and print).

And it is not so much the other powers that restrict the media, but rather a form of complacency towards the system, a kind of lack of conscience regarding the issues at stake in some editorial choices. To some extent, we continue to do as we have always done, referring to the same experts and treating anything that does not fit into the usual news slots with condescension: acting as much as possible in the old-fashioned way. The open-mindedness of some is confronted with the attachment to norms and habits of others in mainstream editorial boards.

Overall, however, an evolution is taking shape in the choice of news offered by the mainstream media, at least in Western Europe. Indeed, much of the information that was already circulating in activist circles and humanitarian NGOs 10, 20, 30 or more years ago was almost never reported by these media outlets, with a few exceptions. Now, however, it is making it past the editorial desks and into the daily news. And when one media outlet reports on it, others often follow suit.

This change of direction in recent years has gradually reduced the transmission of the culture of profit. The existence of the internet has played a significant role in this, as this information is now more accessible to the general public via the internet, making it impossible to ignore in mainstream news.

But the influence of the internet also has a perverse effect. Indeed, the news media are hampered in their lucidity, because the hold that social networks have over the population forces them to relay as much buzz as possible in order to stay in the race. And since they are so blinded by the race for ratings, they are content to transmit as quickly as possible and without filter the news or the latest buzz circulating on the internet, and rarely hesitate to publish what people look at with impulsive curiosity, even though they do not intentionally seek it out or desire it.

There is also an extremely harmful aspect to the news media that journalists do not always seem to be conscious of.
In the interests of rightfulness, some media outlets adopt an oppositional stance towards certain protagonists in the news (political parties, terrorists, controversial authors or works, etc.).
Indeed, just as with citizen opposition movements against politicians, when the media try to oppose a policy, ideology or opinion (such as the far right in general, and sometimes the far left), the more they try to counter the influence of a person or group of people they consider harmful by giving them a lot of coverage in the news, the more successful that person or group of people becomes among a section of the population. This aspect has been highlighted in recent years by certain media outlets in relation to the issue of terrorists. Contrary to what is usually done, these media outlets have had the courage to choose not to reveal the identity of the perpetrators of attacks, or even to give less importance to this subject in daily news coverage.

In the past, opposition to this practice has been observed in Belgium in a rather extreme form, when, in 2006, a special edition of the evening news, in the form of a hoax, was broadcast on French-language public television without the public being immediately warned, announcing the unilateral declaration of independence of Flanders. [142]
By manipulating and provoking public opinion for just a few moments (before the hoax was revealed), with the aim of stimulating a reaction from viewers to Flemish nationalism, this event had the opposite effect to that intended. It was like trying to put out a fire with petrol. The programme shocked a significant proportion of French-speaking viewers, but it particularly offended the Flemish population, who were subsequently informed of it by the Flemish media and thus found themselves held hostage by such an operation, targeted almost as an enemy for the duration of the hoax. This could only serve to boost Flemish nationalism without succeeding in raising awareness among the French-speaking population.
Currently, the French-speaking struggle remains very moderate, while nationalist parties in Flanders hold the majority of votes. Nothing can ever prove that there was a cause-and-effect relationship. But if we understand, both psychologically and through experience, that resistance reinforces the problem, we realise that this programme actually exacerbated the problem because of its lack of empathy towards both the French-speaking audience it targeted and the Flemish population, which was indirectly held hostage by this hoax.

Another striking example that illustrates how giving prominence to an issue in the media can stimulate the development of that issue is the issue of the US presidential elections. One could almost draw the rule that the more a candidate is criticised (depending on the severity of the criticism, its frequency, the severity of the issue being criticised, and the number of media outlets relaying the criticism), the more votes that candidate will receive.

In this sense, opposing individuals or groups of people in the mass media means giving them more power. This is all the more true when this opposition is not clearly expressed but diluted in the daily news, with information that is presented as neutral but is implicitly not really so.

To my knowledge, media executives are largely unaware of this mechanism (*"What you resist persists"*) and the role they play in it. And when they are aware of it, they are still unable to manage or circumvent it.

3. Social media

Social networks as we know them today – particularly those linked to GAFAM – are not about to start working the other way. Even though every citizen who uses them remains fairly free to express their opinions and share them, or even to initiate citizen action, the fact remains that these social networks trade our data in order to better manipulate us through advertising, and that there is almost no will to stop the abuses that take place there, because the development of these networks remains profit-driven and excludes potential ethical goals. Solutions are unlikely to come from them as long as they continue in this vein and citizens remain members.
And calls to unsubscribe have so far fallen on deaf ears. The addiction that social networks have on those who use them is not about to end.

Many of their members are capable of criticising them and denouncing their excesses without actually stopping using them. This even extends to asking advertisers to stop using them to exert pressure, rather than attempting to leave the network themselves as citizens.

4. Entertainment media, particularly television

Apart from the information communicated by television via news programmes, documentaries and debates (discussed above), there is the whole entertainment aspect of television, which offers us fiction, sport, games and shows, each of which indirectly serves as a cultural model imbued with glitz, competition, male domination and, above all, enormous amounts of violence, with advertising breaks adding another layer.
In its early days, television already revealed many aspects of competition through sport and games, sometimes with more violent tendencies. Over time, most fiction and series have gradually incorporated more and more violence, manipulation and perversity through suspense series and films, thrillers, war or adventure films, intrigues and even horror films.

A study (mentioned in the article *"Les écrans rendent-ils violent ?"* *(Do screens make us violent?)* by Xavier Molénat (2004) in Sciences Humaines magazine), conducted in the 1970s on violence on television, already cited the following figures:

> *"By the age of 18, the average American child will have witnessed 40,000 murders and 200,000 acts of violence."* [143]

Over time, this already distressing number has only climbed.
And television does not offer any guidance or present itself as educational, with the exception of a few programmes. As a result, the values it indirectly promotes through its programmes, advertising and fiction are assimilated naturally, without any particular filter, in the same way as events in the viewer's everyday life.

American author Barbara Kingsolver perfectly describes this assimilation in her book, *"Small Wonder - Essays"* (2010), published by Harper Collins [144]:

> *"Our children are growing up in a country where the most important, influential men – from presidents to the coolest movie heroes – solve problems by killing people. Killing is quick, efficient and, what's more, manly."* [145]

Every hour we spend in front of the television, we are immersed in this world (the same is true for most films, novels, comic books, internet content, and even more so for video games).

In a way, it is as if television were a teacher who, on the one hand, dictates theory (the moral high ground) in small doses and, on the other hand, offers us practice (the darkest side of humanity in all its forms) in very large doses.
Tacitly, therefore, it is the negative side that is promoted, given its proportion, even if the official discourse denies it.

Even if we do not directly identify with what we see on the screen, our brains are still working: everything we are exposed to is absorbed by the brain, which unconsciously learns, if not to imitate it, at least to accept it as normal. We become accustomed to what we see, whether we like it or not. Aggressiveness, violence (both psychological and physical), dishonesty, power struggles and manipulation are all aspects that we see on a daily basis on the small screen and which no longer shock us at all.

Our apparent or stated moral model will be based on high values, whereas in practice our values are far less noble. And inevitably, as all this is fed to us in dribs and drabs, as it is integrated in a conditioned and unconscious way, and as almost everyone watches television (95 to 98% of the population), no one is in a position to denounce anything. Even though I am almost certain that at least half of people understand, at least in part, all this.

Many people believe themselves to be immune. But current events regularly prove us wrong.

And in addition to the overt violence conveyed on television, there are the more insidious aspects of manipulation, lying, dishonesty, guilt-tripping, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sadism, provocation, harassment, etc., which have become totally accepted in the behaviours proposed, not only in fiction, but now also in reality. Reality television has blurred the line between fiction and reality.

For, since the 1990s, reality TV has made all these aspects even more prominent and has acted as a catalyst in this regard. It has exploited and made all these aspects acceptable in the eyes of the majority. These trends are its trademark. At first, most viewers criticised reality television because they did not subscribe to these values. But as it was still profitable (people watch even what they criticise), it became widespread and even set the standard. And the excesses it conveys have simply been integrated into people's mindsets and replicated elsewhere. And currently, in some prime-time programmes, provocation, even insults, mockery and verbal aggression are also cultivated, preferably in an insidious way, so that they can always hide behind respect for the law and freedom of expression. The further away from political correctness, the greater the chances of increasing audience share.

And even though viewers believe themselves to be completely immune, their mirror neurons (see the chapter on this subject) are working at full capacity. Despite themselves, they absorb these models and excesses, which become the norm in our society without any real consciousness of what has influenced them.

Because, as this generally happens in small doses and insidiously, we become accustomed to the worst without noticing it.
The current excesses have taken hold gradually enough so far. It has worked like in the fable *"The boiled frog"*, which is featured on my website [146] - [see Ref B].
Everyone watches, accepts, even participates in or encourages what is happening. Today's youth have been educated in this environment and have barely known anything else. And on the internet, via social networks, ordinary people try to reproduce what they have learned from television. Videos, blogs and walls become caricatures of what is done on television.

However, all these excesses only appeared and were exploited and generalised in the first place because they once again made it possible to make a profit, through advertising and the concept of audience ratings.
Television explicitly offers us the opportunity to access culture and entertainment. However, the fascination it exerts on viewers makes them passive and shapes a much less virtuous conditioning of docility and consumption.
When Patrick Le Lay, CEO of TF1 , wrote in 2004 in the book *"Les dirigeants face au changement" (Leaders Facing Change), published by* Ed. du Huitième jour:

> *"... for an advertising message to be perceived, the viewer's brain must be available. Our programmes are designed to make it available: that is to say, to entertain and relax the viewer in order to prepare them between two messages. What we sell to Coca-Cola is available human brain time (...)."* [147]

he was not expressing anything else.

And the reaction of some viewers to this statement, to boycott TF1 for 24 hours, was striking proof of this reality. Namely, that they refused to be duped for only one day a year.
Only people who have been weaned off television for several years can understand the real impact it has on our mental functioning.

5. Male domination

Another area in which we are culturally immersed and which shapes our entire mentality is male domination. And there is a close link between this domination and the culture of profit, as we shall see later.

We are only just beginning to discover the full extent of the damage that this domination causes. And although feminism has made considerable progress over the last century, women's rights are still being trampled on in many ways. Feminists are still too often mocked, fought against or simply ignored. However, more recently, a shift has taken place among the general population due to a singular news story that has had a greater impact than usual: the Weinstein affair, where a simple denunciation on social media was picked up by one media outlet, then relayed by other media outlets, but also by other people involved and via social media, then by those involved in similar situations, then by those in different circles, and then by those in different situations but stemming from the same societal abuses; This has led to a fairly fundamental transformation (or at least the beginning of a transformation) in attitudes on a global scale.
It should be noted that the DSK (Dominique Strauss Khan) affair, for example, which also had a significant media impact, could just as easily have been the trigger. But we were probably not ready for it yet. This aspect will be explained in the chapter on morphic fields.

The process will of course take years. But it is nevertheless a pyramid-shaped movement, where shining a light on the tip of the iceberg ultimately helps to bring to the surface more and more layers that were previously buried underwater – in our unconscious.

It took the courage of a single prominent person to speak out, quickly followed by others, for the whole world to open its eyes, even to widen them, to a common phenomenon that ultimately half the world's population implicitly experiences on a daily basis: sexism in all its forms, including in its most extreme forms: rape and femicide.

We started with the denunciation of rape, then moved on to the denunciation of sexual harassment, and then to questionable behaviour. While the tip of the iceberg was symbolically embodied by the Weinstein case, it seems to me that we have not yet discovered that, at its core, it is the mentality of everyone, including the silence and submission of women (outside of threatening situations), that implicitly makes such acts possible, even if there is a gradation between schoolboy jokes, gallantry, or inappropriate looks, before reaching harassment, rape, and sexual predation.

Male domination is everywhere, and the explicit part of this domination is infinitesimal compared to the implicit part, via the unspoken, the implied, the underhanded behaviour, the unspoken rules that women persist in obeying. However, as long as such domination persists, the world cannot be a good place. Here is a quote from Abdu'l Baha that symbolises this aspect quite well.

> *"The world of humanity has two wings: the masculine and the feminine. Until these two wings are equal in strength, the bird will not fly."*

It is no coincidence that I am using the Weinstein case as an example. The concept of relationships between men and women is quite similar to the theme of the financial world. In this sense, the growing wealth gap also leads us to believe that the bird cannot fly until a balance of wealth between all humans is achieved.

Moreover, the two go hand in hand. The RTBF article *"Le financement reste une chasse gardée, et les femmes ne font pas partie du club" (Financing remains a preserve, and women are not part of the club)* by Maxime Paquay, published on 18 June 2020, illustrates this perfectly. Hinde Boulbayem, CEO and founder of a company, reveals that:

> *"Over the last four years, 98% of investments made by the Brussels-Capital Region have gone to shareholders who are 98% male, which means that 2% of women have been supported with capital. For loans, the figure is 12%."* [148]

The article also mentions that:

> *"A study conducted in France on start-ups, and reported ... in Les Échos, reveals numerous class and gender inequalities. It highlights that men are 2.4 times more likely than women to convince investors."*

It concludes:

> *"Investors, whether public or private, are men and give money to men."*

And it is not even certain that women would be so much more willing to finance other women. The mindset is ingrained on both sides. It is because of this mindset that it is so difficult to have female leaders in economics, science and politics. And this has nothing to do with women's competence. These are mainly unconscious, very powerful preconceptions that can be found at all levels, in all areas, and in each and every one of us.

However, major fundamental shifts are currently underway to rapidly change our perceptions in these two areas – economics and gender inequality – as well as in relation to climate change (which is directly linked to the values promoted in the world of profit-driven enrichment).

The inconsistencies, injustices and damage caused by both the economic and financial system and the glaring inequalities between men and women are directly linked to the respective values of each of these themes, namely: the valorisation of enrichment in today's globalised Western culture on the one hand, and the privileged use of competitiveness or power relations in relationships on the other. And all of this is linked.

These two attitudes, which are harmful due to the highly caricatural nature of their use in our society, form the basis of all our deep-seated psychological conceptions and are destined to be abandoned.

And it will be young people who will most easily grasp this understanding. For they are entering a world where injustices in these areas have become too blatant, while they are not yet too imbued with the mentalities that underlie them. And so they will be less affected by the disbelief, denial and rigidity typical of ageing, so that this will enable them to move beyond.

6. Culture and education

Although the internet, the media and advertising currently play a dominant role in the culture of profit, in the loss of our values, and in the destructive influences this generates for the population and the planet, it would be naïve to think that all this is recent. The drifts that have developed since the second half of the twentieth century arose in a climate that favoured them. The cult of rationality emerged with the birth of modern science in the 17th century. Capitalism developed with the industrial era. Male domination, violence and relationships based on power relations have probably always existed. Serfdom, slavery and colonialism have explicitly left our culture, but they have been replaced by more implicit phenomena, less violent in their application but similar in their consequences, between the poor and less fortunate on the one hand, and the elites of power, wealth and culture on the other. The former are directly dependent on the latter or on society, either financially or through employment contracts they have not chosen and whose terms are rarely favourable to them.

As a result, our historical and current culture is imbued with all the values brought about by these influences from the past. And although this was known and denounced in certain alternative circles that were not widely reported by the mass media, it is now becoming accessible to everyone through recent movements such as *#MeToo* for male domination, *#BlackLivesMatters* for racism, as well as all the massive leaks of secret documents by whistleblowers, which have lifted part of the veil on fraud, abuse and scandals in the spheres of power and finance. We are also gradually discovering in the news the excesses of GAFAM and multinational corporations. The same is true in literature and cinema, where certain books and films, even if they are not censored, are denounced for values that have become intolerable to the majority. And all this is only the beginning of the discoveries of the inadequate foundations of our culture, from which we must learn to free ourselves.

In recent decades, some of these phenomena have been denounced, but they were rarely reported by the mass media, and only certain activist circles were concerned about them. Now, with the advent of immediate and massive communication via the internet, the mass media can no longer afford to ignore this news if they want to remain credible. And as the entire population becomes aware of this, it is beginning to understand the extent to which the established order, the functioning of our society, is largely based on dysfunctions whose consequences almost all of us suffer.

Our culture is imbued with both the values of the past and the current values that have evolved from them. Open any classic work of literature and you will find traces of these values, often wrapped up in heroism and noble sentiments. The same is true of cinema: violence and racism in Westerns, inequalities presented as natural in great sagas, heroes who are almost always male, and so many other drifts that we allow ourselves to be imbued with without necessarily noticing them.
Even school textbooks are still sometimes based on our historical culture. Whether it concerns gender inequality, racism or social injustice, it is not uncommon for these ingredients to be reflected in the illustrations and examples provided.
And how can we educate our children to higher values if we ourselves are not yet fully conscious of the old values on which we base all our thoughts and behaviours?

A very concrete example of this unconscious imprinting of an outdated culture is cited by Frédéric Laloux in his 1914 lecture (in French) *"Reinventing Organisations"*. This anecdote speaks volumes about our cultural conceptions:

> *"Aristotle, in his time, declared that women had fewer teeth than men. Today we know that this is false. But this belief persisted for 2,000 years! It took 2,000 years to realise this."* [149] - *[see Ref 40].*

How many beliefs of this kind do we still hold today? We cannot know, but we are in the process of finding out more and more quickly.

Capitalism was built on these values and concentrates them all.

I) THE IMPLICIT AND THE EXPLICIT

The word 'implicit', or the concept it represents, recurs throughout this first part of the document. I therefore think it is important to focus on this concept now. Because our mentalities, our values, our ways of functioning are imbued, much more than we imagine, with beliefs and conditioning that everyone shares, yet which are never expressed, are not written down anywhere, and are often unconscious. This means that we think that certain aspects of our lives are based on expressed, logical beliefs shared with those around us and our community, when in reality, our behaviours are dictated by unconscious beliefs or values, also shared by those around us and our community, but which are not openly expressed and therefore appear indirectly in our actions and words, without ever being truly questioned, or only superficially, so that they can be kept as they are.
Very often, these beliefs manifest themselves in the form of models, in the more general ways of functioning in society, through the choices and discourse publicly expressed by either ones or others. On the one hand, we are given a clear-cut explanation of one aspect of reality, coloured by logic, ethics and good intentions. But if we look more closely, behind the scenes, we can find quite a few clues that indicate the opposite of what is being expressed, unbeknownst even to the author. And because we trust these explicit messages, we simply do not notice the contradiction and blindly submit to the untruths. This is because, the explicit messages we receive and the contradictions to them often do not reach us in the same contexts and at the same times. We all receive these types of messages, but we also all express them. In a way, we are all acting in the same play, where each character recites their lines correctly while acting out the script of another play.

And contradictions between what is implied and what is said are simply commonplace and punctuate our modes of communication. Most of the time, they fly under our radar, and at best, we deny them. But when we manage to put words to them, the inconsistencies become glaring and shocking.

In Western, capitalist, consumerist society, many explicit values are, all in all, quite comparable to what religions preach in all societies. Altruism, respect, cooperation, sharing, humility, tolerance, generosity and honesty are a few examples. We can add to this all the social struggles: the right to be different, gender equality, the fight against racism, sexism, homophobia, harassment. It is illegal to steal, to defraud, to commit violence against others, to vandalise, to rape, etc.: human rights adapted in certain laws and in our daily lives, in a way. Nothing new, in short. Official discourse (political, media, educational, cultural) generally follows this line. And when it does not, reactions are quick to follow.

But behind the official, moral discourse, it is often the opposite rules that prevail, and this is done through the same or similar channels, sometimes at the very heart of our laws or through the voice of our political representatives, or through advertising, the star system, through much of our film, television and literary culture, and even through our modes of education, customs, conditioning and habits, etc.

As a result, abusive, manipulative, deceitful, contemptuous, aggressive, vampiric, exploitative, provocative and parasitic behaviours are becoming increasingly common behaviours, and are not really frowned upon, with a few exceptions (even if the Weinstein affair, the ensuing *#MeToo* movement and a few others show that attitudes are changing). Most rapes remain unpunished. The rich are getting richer, and the eradication of poverty remains a pipe dream. Planned obsolescence was practised by almost all multinationals until recently. And so on and so forth.

And the two discourses continue to combine in every possible and imaginable way.

Here are a few examples:

1. Some people advocate sustainable development in the fashion industry, even though fashion is, by its very nature, ephemeral and consists of consuming more and more and manufacturing planned obsolescence.

2. Some of those who own shares do so in the most ethical manner by choosing ethically responsible and sustainable companies, yet they will earn dividends of more than 10% or 20%. Thus, under the label of ethically responsible and sustainable, they will enrich themselves abusively, without anyone finding fault with it. However, there is nothing ethical, responsible or sustainable about passing on such a large proportion of profits to shareholders (shareholders who, by benefiting from these dividends, take responsibility for participating in this abuse). By acting in this way, we are depriving either the worker, or the quality of the product and therefore the customer who buys it, or the environment, or all three at once, while the shareholder has contributed nothing (except their surplus money) to keep the machine running.

3. Some companies that claim to be honest, or at least try to present an honest façade, nevertheless use marketing and advertising techniques that deceive, manipulate or intrude on potential customers.

4. Some mass media outlets (following current events) take the opportunity to inform us of all the abuses caused by certain social networks, and in the same programme, or the next one, the same people ask viewers or listeners to react to the programme via those same social networks.

5. Sexism, racism and homophobia are striking examples of this double standard. Few people explicitly approve of these trends. However, progress in these areas has been minimal. It is only recently that we have begun to put words to all the unspoken injustices suffered by the populations concerned, which allows us to measure the extent of these phenomena.
   A striking example of our ability to play between the implicit and the explicit, and to deny our inconsistencies, is the common expression: "I'm not racist, but..." and what follows the "but" is a racist or near-racist statement – a way of explicitly saying that one is not racist, only to make an implicitly racist statement in the same sentence.

6. One of the most striking examples remains that of television, as well as fictional content in television, cinema, novels and comics.
   A minority of talk shows often promote high-minded morals (certain documentaries, reports, debates, etc.), while at the same time we are constantly bombarded with the opposite: competition (in sports and games), consumerism (through advertising and the star system), trashy violence (in thrillers, detective films, war films and science fiction films), perversity (in certain entertainment programmes and reality TV, as well as in drama series); and everything together spread out in the news (even if we condemn it in this context, that's still what we're talking about).

7. Another absolutely mind-boggling example of our blindness to the obvious was highlighted in the book published at the end of 2021 and written by historian Lucile Peytavin: *"Le coût de la virilité" (The Cost of Masculinity),* Ed. e Livre de Poche [150] - [see Ref 5], which masterfully highlights the place of male violence in our society. We know implicitly, and from experience, everything that is said in the book. But we ignore it because we have internalised these rules. Between 80% and 99% of violence in our society – depending on the area – is perpetrated by men. The book lists all the available statistics and calculates the cost to France. And the problem does not lie with men. The problem lies in the culture that we are all steeped in, men and women alike, and which causes us to perpetuate this violence, whether we practise it or suffer it. As long as such phenomena are not put into words, it will be impossible to make them disappear. Currently, the fight against violence in society targets certain populations according to socio-economic status, age, or cultural level. The male target is never explicitly defined, even though it is the first to be defined. It is the education of both men and women that needs to be adapted in order to reduce the rate of all these forms of violence. But as long as this problem remains implicit, nothing can be done to put an end to it.

   Before writing this paragraph, I reread the book you are holding in your hands to find the contexts in which I discussed violence. Not once did I make the connection with the violence that is overwhelmingly prevalent among men. So I have proof in black and white, as far as I am concerned, of what I have just explained: I have internalised the concept. Yet male violence and domination are both denounced throughout the book, but except in this paragraph, I have never been able to make the connection.

In fact, we are very familiar with all the implicit rules that convey our counter-values, and we are capable of using them ourselves, as in the game *Monopoly*, for example, as we saw earlier in the text – even though we explicitly condemn them.
And our economic system blithely mixes the two registers. This is what prevents us from seeing clearly. For contradictory messages generally arrive through the same channels, but at different times. We are almost never confronted with these contradictions directly, except sometimes in two successive news items on the radio or television.
Once we learn to decode these inconsistencies, as in the few examples above, we end up finding them everywhere. They are almost continuous.

As we are in the age of information and the internet, almost all of us now have increasingly explicit access to information that allows us to become more conscious of all these inconsistencies. It is therefore likely that in the coming years, a growing number of them will be 'made explicit' and, as a result, will be forced to disappear in the medium term.

Here is a short video to illustrate the concepts of implicit and explicit. It is an attention test from 1999 proposed by Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris. Concentrate hard and follow the instructions carefully. [151]- [see Ref 33]

Only read the following paragraphs in italics if you have watched the video, otherwise you will not benefit from them.

> *Only a small percentage of people who watch the video and follow the instructions given beforehand are able to recognise the absurdity involved.*
> *Once this absurdity has been explained, it is no longer possible to count in the same way.*
>
> *The subject of the video is not the implicit and explicit in our modes of operation. However, it perfectly illustrates how this works in this context as well.*

By denouncing the implicit aspects of the ways our society functions – and this book attempts to highlight some of them – it will very quickly become impossible to ignore them, even if those who benefit from these aspects are likely to continue to demand that they be denied. However, the number of privileged people in denial is constantly decreasing. Therefore, we have every chance of seeing improvements appear very quickly.

At first, it is not easy to spot these inconsistencies, which are so deeply ingrained in our culture that we take them for granted. But once you get used to seeing them, your eye becomes sharper, and you end up spotting them naturally and more and more often, to the point where you end up being shocked every time, and even more shocked to see that they continue to go unnoticed by the majority.

J) CONCLUSION

If we are even slightly aware of the current state of the world and the challenges for the future, we know that continuing collectively as we have done for over 200 years, and in an increasingly frantic manner, will lead us straight to ruin. It may even be too late already. But all hope is not lost; it would be absurd to give up at this stage.

Currently, 75 to 90% of the population continues to live in total blindness, denial or ignorance of the issues at stake, focused on social media, smartphones, the stress of daily life, the pursuit of easy pleasures and all the addictions that come with it, unwilling to give up any of these achievements that they consider to be progress, assets and privileges. The remaining 10 to 25% are trying, as far as possible, to change their lifestyles and generate a ripple effect, or campaign for politicians to wake up and take action.

But progress is not very rapid (even if the curve is rising). We can legislate as much as we can to limit pollution and waste, provide a semblance of a social safety net for the most disadvantaged, or we can try to develop more sustainable trade with the production of more local, environmentally friendly products and so on. Or we can try to push ahead with technological advances in order to solve the problems that technology itself has created. But as long as a fringe of the population is allowed to seek to enrich themselves, without ceasing to try to create more and more in order to sell more and more, and as long as we persist in being their customers, we will not be able to solve anything.

However, we are each responsible for stepping outside the rules of this game. Because as long as we play along with them, we are their accomplices. And as we will see in part six, stepping out of the game and taking responsibility creates already as such, a ripple effect that helps others to step out of the game too, ultimately creating a snowball effect. And in this context, it is those who are the first to start who bear the greatest responsibility, even if the effects of what they do seem completely futile.

We will have to relearn how to recognise our real needs, calm our impulses and addictions, in order to match trade to real needs and no longer to a demand created from scratch. And the crises will begin to multiply and lead us there.

PART TWO:

FIRST IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS:
Decoupling work and money – decoupling money from profit

A) INTRODUCTION

After having presented certain aspects of our culture of profit and enrichment, and giving an overview of the broad spectrum of their consequences, not only on society and the environment, but also on our mentalities and our way of thinking, here are a few ideas that could become reality in the coming years or decades. Some of these ideas are already in the spirit of the times, but are still considered by the majority to be too utopian. However, given the fundamental societal upheavals required by our arrival at the end of the runway, whereas we have not planned for wings to take off, we will inevitably be forced to radically and rapidly rethink our approach in many areas, first and foremost in the economy, growth, wealth and profit.

The topics discussed in this part are far from exhaustive. I leave that to others who are more competent and talented than I am in these areas. And I am not bringing anything particularly new to the table, as entrepreneurs, bankers, economists and politicians are already defending these kinds of ideas in large numbers, and they are the ones who will help to make them a reality. However, I will explore the topic of universal allowance in a little more depth, as this is probably the first change that will come about.

B) ALTERNATIVES THAT REMAIN ON THE MARGINS

More and more initiatives, experiments of all kinds and alternative projects to our economic system are currently being developed. Examples include local currencies, Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS), the degrowth movement, and voluntary simplicity. Other examples include the Tobin tax aimed at taxing speculation, universal allowance, repair cafés, ethical banks and cooperatives, crowdfunding, microcredit, local buying groups, free markets, Slow Food, fair trade, ethical, energy, organic and sustainable labels, transition towns, the Incredible Edibles, community gardens, sustainable neighbourhoods, food banks, soup kitchens and, above all, the increasingly widespread adoption of organic farming and local trade.

All of these are manifestations of change, and although they are becoming increasingly visible, they still only affect a minority of the population, or a minority of our behaviours.

Some of these initiatives have been around for several decades and are struggling to expand or become widespread, others are more recent and are enjoying faster success, while others remain in the gestation stage, without really coming to fruition.

However, all of this remains largely 'alternative' or marginal, and for the most part, these businesses are simply not taken seriously by the public authorities or the majority of the population. There are probably several reasons for this.

1. We are not yet ready

As we have seen with the fallout from the Weinstein affair, questionings can arise quickly and affect almost everyone, at the initiative of a single person. This person will have been preceded by thousands, even hundreds of millions of others, but the context allows for what might initially have been just a spark to suddenly ignite the powder keg, because of media coverage and other contributing factors. And so realisations multiply as to become a ripple effect. The first piece of information relayed on the internet, then in the press, is quickly followed by another piece of information, which is then relayed in another medium, then by other facts related to the same issue, until almost everyone is involved in the process and things change: in the facts, in the mentalities, in laws. What started out as a news item ends up triggering a social upheaval which, at the time of writing, is still in its infancy but cannot be stopped.

So, among the initiatives and experiences mentioned above, it is likely that, even if some seem to be stagnating without really getting off the ground, there will come a day when something will click, and media coverage and relaying of information to individuals around the world will happen quickly and naturally.

We can also see this with Greta Thunberg's initiative. Her message is not very different from those that others have been relaying for decades. However, this time, the location, her situation, her personality, her age, her boldness, and the timing have made it catch on, and millions of young people, and even adults, are taking her at her word and stopping school (or work) to go and demonstrate on a weekly basis.

It is very likely that our profit-driven culture will evolve into something else, in the same way, because our current circumstances are increasingly conducive to this.

2. The solutions are still part of the problem

On the other hand, some alternatives that are not catching on are still based on a model that continues to give money the same role.

The intentions behind these initiatives are indeed good, but the reasoning behind how they work is still, in part, modelled on the reasoning that created the problem in the first place.

Indeed, some of these experiments or projects do not challenge the very foundations of our economic and financial system, including the idea that money is earned through work, inheritance, or privilege.

The reasoning that created the problem cannot generate the solution. Whatever the solutions may be, they must necessarily be based on a different line of reasoning from the problem they are trying to solve. This requires a different relationship with reality.

What matters most in order to move away from problematic thinking is, on the one hand, to abandon the growth and profit mentality and, on the other hand, to decouple money from work, merit and the notion of recognition. This leads us to reconsider the concept of work.

C) ABANDONING OUR BELIEFS ABOUT GROWTH AND UPSETTING THE LOGIC OF EMPLOYMENT

Rather than advocating growth – which ultimately only benefits those who are already rich: shareholders, banks, CEOs, investment fund managers, stock market workers and other profit-makers, etc. - it is our

duty to work towards the degrowth of all these aspects of our societies and to stop believing all the prophets of doom who try to stir up fear with their arguments, repeating that without growth we are threatened with recession, massive job losses, capital flight, loss of purchasing power, increased poverty, currency devaluation, etc.

Growth is a vicious circle which, while it may temporarily create a few jobs, increase purchasing power, and prevent recessions and capital flight, etc., is nevertheless an illusion. We do create jobs, but we never achieve full employment, and we create more and more jobs that do not meet any real need in society, more and more precarious, temporary and poorly paid jobs. Most existing jobs, even the most useful ones, are increasingly plagued by a flood of unnecessary tasks (mostly administrative and supervisory) that reduce actual working time. And the creation of Bullshit Jobs, discussed by David Graeber in his book "*Bullshit Jobs - a theory*" – Publisher: Simon & Schuster (2019) (already cited on multiple occasions) [152] - [see Ref 4], is booming. This is not what we need.

Having worked myself in temporary jobs, in longer-term bullshit jobs, and having lost my health in this hellish circus, I know how much this is not what we need.

It's not job security we need. It's the security of having a stable income that is sufficient to live with dignity and support our loved ones who depend on us. Changing jobs is not that problematic. Losing a professional life project is much more difficult, but it can be overcome if there are no debts involved.

It is quite clear that changing the social system to create more equality and solidarity, to save our environment and ensure our long-term human survival, necessarily means that all jobs that appear useful but indirectly contribute to the deterioration of our society will have to disappear. And for many of them, this means giving up their life project. This will indeed be the price we have to pay to save lives and ensure our future survival for all. And it is entirely possible to recover from this. But rather than putting pressure on merchants, entrepreneurs and anyone else threatened with bankruptcy and unemployment, it would be better to start thinking about providing for their needs, helping them, supporting them, and offering them a new meaning to their lives, with new opportunities for training, employment, or other activities. The pandemic has already clearly shown the way forward in this direction and proven that it is possible.

Because if money is no longer directed towards profit and therefore towards profiteers, but towards society, there will be a mountain of jobs (or useful activities) to be created, which will enable everyone to have a citizen or professional life project. Among these, what immediately comes to mind is the increase in nursing staff in hospitals and nursing homes and in mobile nursing staff. This will mean tens of thousands of jobs in Belgium alone (population approx. 11 million). At this level alone, we will be able to put social and human ties back before technical skills. Similarly, in education, we can immediately think of doubling the number of teachers and educators in order to prioritise the quality of teaching and improve the human aspect. This is even more important in special education.

We could also increase social and psychological support for individuals. The number of professionals in the fields of psychological therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, osteopathy, social work, family support, etc. The supply in these professions could then also explode. We could also consider offering more educational opportunities in prisons to enable prisoners to leave not only with professional skills, but also with an openness to other references than those that led them to commit their crimes, through psychological support, courses and access to cultural content.

The worlds of culture and sport could also boom, offering not so much festivals, shows, matches and championships to attend, but rather more courses and opportunities for everyone to practise culture or sport in a practical way without commercialising them, thus making them accessible to all. This applies to every sport, to music creation, writing, theatre, dance, the visual arts, etc., and to all crafts.

We could also return to social connection in all communication with citizens. Rather than operating with a telephone programme that automatically answers callers, avoiding as much as possible that the call reaches a real person, we will reverse the trend and this will also create a significant number of new jobs.

In the same way, many services could become human again, such as table service in the hotel and catering industry rather than bar service. It is possible to put humans back into many services where we had put machines, without being reactionary to technology that saves some of the most difficult jobs or improves everyone's quality of life in a more sustainable way.

We can also imagine the development of all kinds of mediation services that could relieve the burden on the courts.

And if all these new jobs could be done on a reduced working hours basis (for a decent income), they could benefit even more candidates and allow those who take them to train for their new profession, which could speed up the transition.

I am only mentioning a few of the possibilities that come to mind as most evident. I am not claiming that they are the best, and hundreds of others could be imagined. But the potential for job creation in the more social, human and cultural aspects is unlimited. We can go in any direction to create jobs. If we stop looking for the easy way out, the systematic use of technology and the pursuit of money, there are millions of job opportunities to be created. The main thing is to put people back at the centre of every profession and, above all, to stop devaluing all the professions that enhance the social quality of our society. By lightening the workload of the most useful professions, reducing working hours and creating bonds within professional teams, we can also create more jobs.

This upheaval would at least partially compensate for the jobs that will disappear with all the companies producing superfluous goods, all the shops selling useless or ephemeral items (often linked to fashion), or promoting waste and pollution, all the unproductive administrative and superfluous control systems, and by reducing all cultural aspects geared towards profit, easy pleasure, spectator inertia, mass entertainment, or those geared solely towards a certain socio-cultural elite. All of this probably represents more than half of the jobs that currently exist.

This would allow people to work less, increase the meaning that each person can give to their work, and above all increase the quality of work, the pleasure that can be found in it, and the direct and social usefulness of each job, as well as the quality of the relationship between workers, or between workers and users, patients or customers. It would also drastically reduce the threat of job loss, burnout and all the health problems indirectly linked to working conditions that are currently often inadequate.

On the other hand, we do not need to increase purchasing power in general. We have a duty to give sufficient purchasing power to the most disadvantaged, but for the rest, we have to relearn how to live with what we need, let go of everything that is superfluous and change our attachment to property.

Capital flight is not something to be feared in relation to the population. Multinationals only enrich the wealthiest citizens, not states, because what they pay in taxes is laughable compared to what everyone else has to pay. What's more, they have no qualms about relocating or even closing down altogether, often playing dishonest games that ultimately cheat everyone, from politicians to workers. If they decrease in number and power, and we create other jobs such as those mentioned above, we will gain financially. In many cases, local production can perfectly compensate for the production of multinationals.

Nevertheless, there will be difficult periods of transition to go through. Current events are already proving this to us on a daily basis, and it is beginning to affect each of us more and more directly. And this is likely

to continue to intensify until we all understand that we have to upset our habits and that these transformations are bearing fruit. We will have to reinvent the way we entertain ourselves, meet up, celebrate, but also work, shelter, eat, heat our homes, and so on. The excesses of the recent past will probably be more moderate and fairer in the future, less driven by the pursuit of profit and the insatiable desires of those who offer their services or art, and more by the real desires and needs of the population.

This transition is already underway, but understanding its meaning, purpose and how it will be achieved can help guide individual choices in order to facilitate its implementation, avoid pitfalls, motivate us to commit to it and give it meaning.

If a large part of the population decided to take action in this direction, there would be a much more effective way of achieving it: that of introducing an unconditional income for the entire population, from the poorest to the richest, from birth to death. This could be done gradually, with the most disadvantaged and those whose jobs will disappear first benefiting first. This is the subject of the following chapter.

D) DECOUPLING WORK AND MONEY - UNIVERSAL ALLOWANCE

If we are able to totally upset our approach to the economy by considering decoupling money from work, we will have the keys to solving most of the current problems in our society in a chain reaction. The principle is simple: if we no longer work to survive, everything changes. Similarly, if enrichment through profit becomes obsolete, most of what is currently marketed will no longer be: everything changes too. And there will be much less work to do in these areas, but so many more useful and interesting things to do. Universal allowance could then be one of the solutions.

It would allow everyone, unconditionally, to have access to human rights, namely: the right to food, housing, to live in dignity, to live in peace, etc., without this being conditional on anything. And the availability of this means of exchange would also provide access to greater freedom: the freedom to choose how to feed oneself, where to live, and how to access basic comforts.

By eradicating the perpetual lack of money, the universal allowance would remove the threat to survival that hangs over a significant part of the population: the threat of being evicted from their homes or country, the threat of not being able to access water, energy, food, education, healthcare, the threat to their access to income once they reach retirement age, the threat of being exploited, harassed, dismissed, repudiated, or even killed, ...

Unconditional income would remove the sword of Damocles from the backs of all those who are struggling, and there are more and more of them: the unemployed, pensioners, the sick, the homeless and all other marginalised people who no longer have access to work or who can no longer make ends meet despite working. It would remove the pressure or threat hanging over the growing number of people who work while teetering on the brink of collapse. It would also finally enable the emancipation of women. It would have the immediate effect of improving the quality of life for a significant portion of the population and would probably lead to certain recoveries.

However, this seems a risky gamble, because if no work is remunerated, it will still be necessary to ensure that the work is done, whatever form it takes. But when threats disappear, goodwill emerges. This is what tends to emerge from experiments already carried out in the field of universal allowance.

The very concept of a universal allowance is still difficult to imagine in the context of our current society. However, social security, allowances/benefits of all kinds, retirement pensions, and certain services that are free for all or for a particular section of society are already precursors of what a universal allowance could become.

Although I am speaking in the conditional tense, there is in fact a good chance that it will be implemented in at least one country in the coming decade. It could be trialled in all sorts of forms. And even if there is urgency, its implementation will have to be gradual.

Various experiments are currently underway or have already been carried out. Among them is the one that took place in Finland, but will not be repeated [153], or the one in Kenya proposed by the *Give Directly* association [154] as well as in Canada [155].
In 2020, an experiment was also launched in Germany during 3 years [156], as a test [157].

Here is a more comprehensive report on the subject, which also mentions experiments that took place before 2017 [158].

This topic is (or has been) considered in quite a few other countries, including Switzerland (which rejected its implementation by referendum), France and Belgium.

During the pandemic, Spain committed to introducing a universal income [159].

In July 2020, the *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP) called for a temporary basic income to be granted to the 2.7 billion people considered poor worldwide, with the aim of combating the COVID-19 pandemic. [160]

While it is quite inconceivable to envisage a universal allowance for all in the current context, it is possible to attempt to implement it locally, partially or temporarily in order to test all its aspects, advantages and consequences. A single success will lead to the process being extended and even becoming widespread.

This will probably be an inevitable step in our evolution. As soon as one country succeeds in introducing it for its entire population, it will become impossible to deny that it is simply feasible to implement. However, it will be the political choices made by citizens in each country that will determine how long it takes for it to be implemented. And this may happen much sooner than we imagine, simply because we will no longer have much choice but to change the way we operate as a society.

1. Fewer jobs to fill

Some (the majority) see universal allowance as a supplement to income from work or other sources. In my view, this aspect should only be considered as a step towards a universal allowance that would be comfortable and independent of any work; the latter would then no longer be remunerated. For as long as we keep in mind that work must be remunerated, all the abuses linked to profit and, more broadly, to the destruction of life on the planet, will inevitably continue. Persisting in linking work and money is tantamount to proposing a half-solution while retaining the entire problem. To truly dissolve all the current issues directly or indirectly related to money, it will be necessary to exclude all remuneration for work. This implies that we will have to find other ways to motivate citizens to work or else achieve a much more advanced level of evolution in mentalities.

The upheavals that are coming in society will lead to a considerable reduction in the amount of work needed for it to function properly. In this sense, universal allowance will be both a solution and a catalyst for other alternatives. It is, in a way, the driving force behind a virtuous circle: by increasing everyone's freedom and autonomy, improving everyone's health, reducing the mentality of power struggles, decreasing the pursuit of profit, wealth and consumption, causing a massive reduction in bureaucracy, and stimulating all the virtues associated with solidarity (empathy, mutual aid, respect, ...) and probably many other advantages that we will discover.

A huge number of jobs will disappear, along with all wasteful, futile and polluting production. In other words, when the economy will serve the community to satisfy only the needs of everyone, as perfectly illustrated by the tale of *"The American Tourist and Mexican Fisherman "* [161] - [see Ref D]. This will also have an impact on all administrative aspects related to salaries, taxation, social services, etc.

On this subject, David Graeber (in his book on *"Bullshit Jobs - a theory"* – Publisher: Simon & Schuster (2019) [162]) describes the phenomenal amount of useless work that our society tolerates and even produces. He even manages to quantify it as follows:

> *"We could easily become leisure societies and introduce twenty-hour working weeks. Maybe even fifteen. Instead, we find ourselves collectively condemned to spend most of our waking lives at work, performing tasks that we know have no meaningful impact on the world."*
>
> *"To sum up: if 37% of jobs are bullshit jobs, and if 37% of the remaining 63% are spent supporting bullshit jobs, then just over 50% of all work is bullshit jobs in the broadest sense. Add to that the bullshitisation of useful professions (at least 50% for office work, probably less for other types of activities) and the various jobs that only exist because everyone is too busy working (dog groomers or 24-hour pizza delivery drivers, to name but two), we could probably reduce the actual working week to fifteen hours, or even twelve, and no one would notice.* [163] *- [see Ref 4]*

If universal allowance becomes widespread, it will inherently have the effect of eliminating all unnecessary jobs. And thus, it will help to improve the mental health of the population. Because the meaning we give to our work is fundamental to both our mental and physical health. However, in many jobs, particularly in institutions and large companies, not only is the worker's role extremely minimal in terms of overall output, but in many cases, the worker themselves is not really able to understand the usefulness of what they do on a daily basis. The existence of a universal allowance would probably lead to a reduction in the size of companies and bring institutions closer to citizens.

Furthermore, if digitalisation, automation, robotisation and the use of artificial intelligence continue (which is not guaranteed), they could replace, reduce or greatly facilitate many tasks in industry, administration, commerce, transport and even education. But this remains conditional. Firstly, because it is not so much technology that we need as solidarity. Secondly, because it is not certain that we will be able to continue in this direction, given the drifts that it can lead to. And finally, we must also take into account that, while technology makes our lives easier, it often creates a rebound effect, meaning that rather than saving time, money, energy and resources, it leads us to exploit the area in question even more and causes waste to skyrocket, contrary to the original intention behind the developments, inventions or creations.

If we manage to get back to the essentials, the majority of jobs would then increasingly focus on the social, educational, administrative, cultural and service sectors.

2. Creating motivation to work

> *"A universal income could thus make it possible to revalue the truly essential professions that have come to the fore during the coronavirus epidemic, but also completely change our relationship with time and money. It would no longer be a question of selling our time in order to try to earn a living, but rather of having the opportunity to invest ourselves in activities that are useful to a new society that is more just, united, ecological and resilient."*
> Laurie Debove in the article *"L'Espagne instaure un revenu universel face au coronavirus " (Spain introduces universal income in response to coronavirus)* (2020) [164].

With universal allowance, the problem of employment would therefore be reversed. It would no longer be a question of trying to create jobs to put people to work (and give them a means of subsistence).

Conversely, it would then be necessary to make jobs more attractive, working conditions fairer and more humane, and also to create incentives to work while integrating a total upheaval of the labour market.

Currently, the vast majority of individuals are conditioned to accept work only for the financial reward that allows them to meet their needs. The existence of an unconditional income would remove this threat to survival for those who lose their jobs, making it easier to retrain for more socially useful tasks or to decide to stop working altogether, or even simply to work less.

In the long term, few people would not want to work or make themselves useful. The concept of unpaid work is not that difficult to understand.

Firstly, because until recently, more than 50% of humanity has always known unpaid work: mothers were solely responsible for raising children and managing everything related to the family and the home, and were not paid for this work. This continues to be the case in some cultures. And volunteering, whether informal (simple mutual aid) or formal (voluntary work), is already an integral part of the activities of a large part of the population.
The broader we expand the concept, the more we understand that "working" does not necessarily require remuneration.

On the other hand, if our armed forces can motivate people to enlist, to leave their families, their environment and their country behind and risk being killed, injured or traumatised on the other side of the world, it seems entirely possible to me that we could motivate people to commit to jobs that are significantly less risky, demanding and destructive, with shorter hours, while allowing them to remain in their own environment, in exchange for a form of recognition that gives meaning to the profession.

For most people, work simply gives meaning to life, whether they are paid or not. What's more, it promotes personal fulfilment and social integration. Not to mention that it is beneficial for health and longevity. Here is an article (in French) that reveals how volunteering contributes to good health [165].

On the other hand, there are other ways besides money to motivate people to work, first and foremost recognition. This can encourage people to take on less attractive jobs.

Not paying people for their work would intrinsically and profoundly change their status, and therefore also their working conditions, giving them more freedom in terms of their choice of work and the training required to get it, as well as more rights vis-à-vis their employer, since blackmailing them into working would no longer involve the remuneration that goes with it.

It should be noted that, according to a study cited on the website of the French movement for basic income 2% of individuals say they would stop working if they had a universal income [166].
It is likely that the reality would prove that this proportion would be higher, especially if work were no longer remunerated. Nevertheless, this still means that the vast majority of the population is not prepared to sit back and feel like they are on perpetual holiday if their survival were guaranteed by a universal allowance.

And for the most difficult or least attractive jobs, it would probably be necessary to find other motivations or benefits than money, or even certain obligations within the framework of civil service, for example, but which could be made attractive in the way they are proposed and managed (e.g. choice of age, field, timing, place of work (travel), etc.)..

There are certainly dozens of other possibilities that would encourage people to work or give them recognition for their work, other than money. Success is already intrinsically a form of recognition for artists, storekeepers and most liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, therapists, architects, etc.).

3. Conception of work

The concept of work itself would also expand and could take on entirely new forms, in a much more flexible way than the 40-hour week or contracts between defined legal entities. Some would choose to stop working, others to work less or at very different paces.
Like mothers who take on household chores, management and education tasks, much of the mutual aid and solidarity could be provided without the need for contracts, rules, etc.

As the need for labour would decrease, it would be possible to hire more people for the same job, but on a part-time basis. This could also lead to a re-humanisation of work. One example is all healthcare professions, particularly in hospitals, where, due to insufficient budgets, healthcare staff currently focus on the technical aspects of their work. This leads to patients being treated with significantly less care and removes the human aspect that is nevertheless the most attractive aspect of these professions.

The distribution of working time, schedules, teleworking, combining several jobs; all working conditions would become much more flexible.

Even the quality of the work itself would no longer be subject to competition as it is today. Everyone would work according to their skills, motivation, age, physical, psychological and intellectual abilities, training and experience, at their own pace; in other words, according to what they are capable of giving. For the same job, in similar circumstances, two different people would no longer necessarily be required to do the same thing. This would probably also change the hierarchical pyramid structure that currently exists in most companies, institutions and other organisations, and would allow *"Intelligence collective" (Collective intelligence)* (described in my article (in French) of the same name [167] - [see Ref E]) to deploy more effectively.

All these aspects could therefore significantly reduce stress levels and, conversely, increase worker motivation and collaboration between workers.

The universal allowance would not only provide most of us with the security to survive no matter what happens, but it would also give us a freedom that we cannot yet imagine. Many of our references would become obsolete. No more parental leave, sabbaticals, study trips, part-time work, or retirement age. These frameworks would no longer be necessary. Parents would choose to devote as much time as they wanted to their children's education, choosing their own schedules and activities outside the home. Going abroad to work, study or have other experiences would be easier and more flexible. We could work until the age that suits us. We could resume our studies at any age and combine work and study more easily. With the help of collective intelligence, all the pieces of the puzzle would fall into place much more easily, so that the entire organisation and structure of society would allow everyone to take their place, their rightful place, and nothing but their place, in harmony with their loved ones and neighbours. Of course, not everything would be perfect. But the living conditions of the majority would be so changed that the best intentions would be at work. And if everyone could occupy a place that they had chosen and for which they could give their best, it would be much easier to find solutions to each of the problems that arose.

4. Financing the universal allowance

One of the most persistent arguments against universal allowance concerns its financing. Indeed, it would not be self-evident if nothing changed from the current context.

However, other conceptions of society could make it possible. Because, if we think about it carefully: money is a means of exchange, and if we consider that there are currently still enough resources on earth to meet everyone's needs (in the expectation that we will return to decent needs and organise ourselves in a coherent manner to meet them): there should be absolutely no reason why everyone should not have the means of exchange necessary to obtain food, housing and certain other amenities or care.

Of course, when we start from the reference point of an incoherent, cacophonous, unequal and unjust system such as ours today, we are likely to encounter many obstacles along the way. The path may therefore not be easy at all. But the goal is entirely achievable. The most promising route probably lies in gradually detaching ourselves from the current system by building a parallel system on new foundations, through trial and error, as with any new learning process.

It will not be necessary to dismantle what already exists, nor even to oppose it. It will simply be necessary to implement what is new, without fear of the unknown, and while remaining vigilant to create something that is coherent and fair for all. All of this is already beginning to blossom in many places. This theme will be developed further below.

The questioning of the current concept of work, which is already underway, will intensify. New ideas emerge every day (after all, there are more than 8 billion of us who can come up with them), and the best ones spread quickly.
It would be better if the new modes of functioning were already largely operational by the time our current economy collapses, so that we can avoid anything that would lead to shortages or major problems in the supply of essential goods.

5. Universal allowance would give power to those who currently have not in the least access to it

Universal allowance would restore dignity, power and freedom to all those who today depend on the goodwill of their employer or the institutions of the country where they live, or even on chance or the presence or absence of supportive people close to them if they have no access to any income.

And it is precisely because it would give power to so many people that those who currently hold power – both political and financial – will, for the most part, fight to the bitter end to try to prevent such a right from coming into being.

Employers will no longer have a workforce at their beck and call to do their bidding. Every worker will be able to demand that their work is, first and foremost, useful, but also that they are offered good conditions in which to do it. It will no longer be necessary, or at least much less so, to resort to pressure from trade unions to get employers to collaborate, engage in dialogue, listen to and respect workers. Temperamental, dictatorial, lazy, manipulative and dishonest team leaders will simply no longer have anyone willing to work with them. Many levels of hierarchy in companies and institutions will be able to disappear, simply because they are useless and offer only a semblance of efficiency.

The power relationship that currently exists in most jobs between hierarchical levels would be completely called into question. This power would be recognised if the person holding it is competent and there is

trust between the protagonists. This is already frequently the case today. But it is far from being widespread. And in the event of disagreement, it is currently always the person with the power, i.e. the hierarchical superior, who has the final say. However, in the context of a job where the worker's survival is much less at stake, that worker will be able to veto and not blindly and helplessly accept incoherent orders from above.
In a way, anyone applying for a new job could ask to see the CVs of their future team members before agreeing to sign any contract. I am caricaturing, of course, but the idea is that by providing a universal allowance, the balance of power will evolve towards greater consciousness, respect and genuine collaboration between the parties involved.

On the other hand, while it will probably be necessary to start with an allowance to supplement other incomes, or for those who have no resources to live on, the creation of a universal income will truly bring about a profound change in mentalities. For, it is its unconditional nature that will bring people together in all their diversity, without exception. David Graeber (in his book *"Bullshit Jobs - a theory"* – Publisher: Simon & Schuster (2019) [168] explains it in these terms:

> *"... a universal basic income system must allocate enough money to everyone to enable them to live decently. And, above all, it must be completely unconditional. Everyone must be entitled to it, even those who do not need it. It's definitely worth a try! It's a way of affirming that, when it comes to the fundamentals of existence, everyone deserves the same, without conditions. In this way, we establish a human right, not charity or a mere patching-up when other sources of income are lacking."* [169]

He also emphasises the fact that inequalities, differences and injustices will diminish in this new context:

> *"Paying everyone the same amount is a fundamental starting point, given the symbolic power of money. When you give exactly the same amount to everyone, men and women, young and old, lower castes and upper castes, these differences gradually fade away."*
>
> *"Paying women the same as men would instantly place a phenomenal share of the world's wealth in their hands. And everyone knows that wealth is power."* [170] - *[see Ref 4]*

Decoupling money from work provides part of the solution. But we also need to move away from profit-driven mentalities. This is the subject of the next chapter.

E) DECOUPLING MONEY FROM THE PURSUIT OF PROFIT

In the best of all worlds, we could imagine that the financial value of goods and services could become fairer again; that the pursuit of wealth would become obsolete; that money would regain its stability universally; and that the sharing of goods would become equitable.
Put this way, it may seem like a pipe dream. And yet I believe all this is achievable in the medium term. For three very concrete reasons.

Human evolution, despite all the detours we take, is irrevocably moving in this direction. What's more, this is the direction that a growing proportion of the population wants to take, despite the serious abuses of recent decades that some continue to inflict on us. The current curve of progress in this direction is accelerating, suggesting that what seems utopian today may not be so far from becoming reality.

On the other hand, the existence of internet communication, which connects everyone and allows information to be shared live, particularly content that was not accessible to us in the past, means that change can be achieved quickly and for almost everyone.

And the third reason I believe this will happen much faster than expected is that if we fail to make this evolutionary leap in record time, we will simply be wiped off the map.

But to achieve such upheavals on a global scale, we will need consciousness. And global consciousness depends largely on the consciousness of each individual.

The very concept of money should evolve, in the sense that it should no longer be coveted for its own sake, that it should no longer be a means of survival for the majority, that its value should stabilise along with that of goods, and finally that it should no longer be a source of admiration and power.

Each of these aspects is already being experimented with in alternative forms of commerce, or in certain associations. Many local authorities recognise them, or legislate to facilitate their use. The utopia of this upheaval is therefore only apparent, and the multiplication and generalisation of these forms of money use is already taking shape, even if the majority do not necessarily perceive it as reality yet.

By making these characteristics of money use accessible to all and combining them, we can achieve a 180° shift in its conception, restoring it to its original function. This will transform our entire relationship with the world and all relationships between individuals. We will rediscover our true humanity and lose our dependence on power games, superficiality and easy pleasures. In fact, we will see the disappearance of all the illusions that capitalist society holds out to us.

This will first require us to reach the maturity to understand that money cannot be managed by private structures that are profit-hungry and devoid of conscience: banks, the stock market and the world of shareholders behind them. We still seem to be very, very far from this, really very, very far. But whether it is the accumulation of crises and their increasing severity, or the total collapse of the economic system, everything will lead us in this direction. And the sooner and the more people understand this, the less painful the transition will be.

1. Creating an economy that is no longer governed by money

And if we manage to make sufficient progress with the transition before everything collapses, this could above all save lives and suffering for the less privileged. And for those who will be spared the worst, there will inevitably be intermediate situations to go through that will probably not be comfortable, but which could nevertheless remain within acceptable limits if the context allows us to anticipate the future situation. The evolutions will take shape gradually, in different ways, quickly or slowly, depending on the location. The sooner we manage to voluntarily restrict our privileges, the more lives and suffering we will spare in other parts of the world and among the less privileged sections of our societies.

The process of transformation is already underway. The rejection of the profit system – due to the total inconsistency it represents – is becoming increasingly obvious to a growing number of citizens. Public authorities are already considering certain aspects of this scenario, and the advent of artificial intelligence could boost these developments if it is used wisely. We are already seeing a steady increase in the number of members of alternative banks and cooperatives.

Each new crisis takes us further in this direction.

And it will not necessarily be essential to impose anything on anyone. Because those who are most resistant to the new systems – still in the majority at present – will eventually adapt to them, either because they will end up going with the flow, or because they will no longer have any interest in operating according to the old rules that no longer bring them much benefit, or simply because they will reach retirement age.

Absolutely nothing, except willpower, would prevent new systems from becoming part of the landscape while our traditional system is still in place.

There is no guarantee that we will succeed. However, this is the path that is currently emerging. And we do not have many other alternatives to choose from. Either we continue as we have always done, giving money a power that creates inequality and injustice and proposing solutions based on the same register of reasoning as that of the problem. Or we abandon this type of reasoning and redesign our economy from new perspectives without having to destroy the system we are leaving behind. The shift can be gradual and acceptable to the majority. The idea behind all this is not to define what should happen, but to understand that it will be possible to gradually move towards alternative modes of functioning without having to destroy or abruptly abandon current modes of operation, or even oppose those who persist in this direction.

It is crises that will awaken our solidarity. It is likely that new forms of economy will emerge from 100% voluntary initiatives not supervised by the state (until the state agrees to support them without distorting them). It is also likely that solutions will appear naturally as the system becomes healthier.

- The role of citizen initiatives

There are countless citizen initiatives that do what our governments do not take responsibility for doing, and which, while not perfect, are extremely effective in creating solidarity and bonds, saving lives, sparing or alleviating suffering, and helping to build a society that functions closer to the heart and further away from all sources of profit. They exist in every country. And it is not uncommon to see work initiated by citizens eventually taken up by the authorities and snowballing in other countries. And even if not all initiatives take hold or are sustained over time, it is their very existence and multiplication that enables our society to evolve. Citizen involvement in volunteering is not insignificant, yet it receives little media coverage. It is not always possible to count the number of volunteers or the number of hours they work, as a very large part of volunteering is informal. The statistics I have seen online estimate the rate of volunteering in Belgium, France and Quebec to be between 9% (formal) and 79% (formal and informal) of the total population over the age of 15 in these countries. This puts things into perspective. But it still means that the population is doing a tremendous amount of work, which goes completely unnoticed.

It is therefore not so much the number of laws that need to be created or improved, but rather the direct participation of as many citizens as possible in social life. Some associations are growing to industrial size, even becoming international and receiving subsidies from the state, either directly or indirectly through tax breaks for those who make donations. Their presence can be seen as a sign of shortcomings in governance, but we can work to ensure that our societies of tomorrow are organised increasingly around and on the basis of these citizen initiatives, and much less on a governmental and institutional structure based on laws, rules and hierarchical decisions of power.

It is essential that these local associations and initiatives continue to be driven primarily by solidarity, completely detached from commercial considerations, and that they operate on the basis of collective intelligence, which gives them significant growth potential.

Some of these associations are already showing us the way towards what could become widespread in the future. This area has incredible potential, mainly in terms of social assistance: for migrants, people with health problems or disabilities, children, the elderly, people in need, the homeless, victims of violence, accidents or disasters, or even in the context of humanitarian aid to more distant countries. Many people who are active in this field share that the experience has a positive impact on them. Once the fear of

getting started has been overcome, generosity, openness, achievements and the connections made take over, despite certain problems encountered.

Of course, none of this is perfect. Tensions, abuse, excesses and inaction also exist in these organisations and citizen initiatives. The important thing is to adopt the mindset that drives people to get involved in this kind of action.

2. A single initiative and the snowball effect

It is to be hoped, and indeed quite likely, that such initiatives will continue to be created. As they multiply, they will eventually weave an increasingly dense collective network of solidarity, which will be increasingly supported by public authorities and will ultimately become indispensable. This means that more and more people will benefit from the services of these initiatives in an increasingly broad context of their lives, and that part of economic life will shift towards these types of functioning. Unlike what left-wing political parties generally propose, help and assistance will increasingly come from peers rather than from a structure pre-established by an authority and enshrined in law. This means that solidarity will be re-humanised. We will operate much less in terms of rights and duties, and much more in terms of connections, sharing, mutual aid and gift of self. And it is this very aspect that will feed the process itself. Because altruism is contagious, as we will see later.

On the other hand, if something that is initiated in one part of the world works well, it will very quickly be copied by others and eventually become widespread. The warnings and photos on cigarette packets, the ban on plastic bags, transition towns, pedestrianised city centres. What all these initiatives have in common is that they started in one place on the planet and were then copied elsewhere, eventually becoming law and becoming widespread everywhere or almost everywhere.
Some initiatives fail. It's all a matter of trial and error. But on a global scale, progress is rapid, given that there are more than 8 billion people and a large proportion of them are already invested in finding solutions. This offers unimaginable potential for creativity and goodwill to push this transition to become a reality and be widespread.

There are already local initiatives that could spread on a relatively large scale. These include either a single project, such as Bertrand Picard's solar-powered aeroplane, or the creation of a system of floating barriers to clean up the "seventh continent" of plastic in the ocean, created by Dutchman Boyan Slat.
There are other more general initiatives, such as the one created within the TED conference platform (short conferences available free of charge as videos on the internet) with the aim of bringing together and promoting the best ideas for halting climate change, as well as other initiatives promoting research in this area in universities. There are movements that stem from citizen initiatives such as those of:

- Julien Vidal's initiative – via his website [171] - [see Ref 34] – and his first book, *"Ça commence par moi"* (*It starts with me*, 2018) Ed. du Seuil (2018)[172], which are the result of a challenge he set himself to make one change in his habits every day for a year, moving towards a reduction of consumption and respect for the environment. He proposes these actions on his website.
- or YouTubers who created *"On est prêt" (We are ready)* [Source: https://www.onestpret.com];
- or associations such as *Avaaz*, which regularly launch petitions to defend citizen and environmental causes around the world. They regularly and quickly manage to gather hundreds of thousands of signatures from among their tens of millions of members [173];
- or *WeMove.Eu*, which achieves progress through petitions, demonstrations and lobbying on a very large scale in Europe [174];
- Not to mention Greta Thunberg, who has rallied millions of striking schoolchildren and hundreds of millions of supporters around the world. [175]

These are just a few examples among many others emerging around the world. And this is only the beginning. There is no guarantee that it will work. However, for the moment, many of these initiatives are

converging to form a movement. Others will join them, in ever-increasing numbers. Some will be long-term, while others will gain almost universal support in a flash. It may be that, when goodwill becomes the majority view, the power we have to turn the tide quickly will prove immense.

3. Building the new tower

In the first part, we saw that our economic system resembles a tower on the verge of collapse. And that in order to prepare for the social upheavals that are in the air, it is in our best interest to set about building a new tower, without the need to consolidate, save or destroy the first tower. The energy that will be invested in the new tower will automatically no longer be invested in the old one.

And when humans abandon the psychological survival mode t in which the current economic situation locked them up, we will be amazed to see a new intelligence blossom as all kinds of new citizen initiatives will be implemented. Because when we abandon this survival mode, the psychological energy that was constantly devoted to survival can then be deployed in all other areas of life: intuition, creativity, consciousness, wisdom, empathy, solidarity, reasoning. All these aspects, multiplied by the number of citizens potentially concerned, and even more so if we take into account collective intelligence (see the chapter on this subject) will make it possible to build the new system – the second tower – very quickly once the movement is well underway. The foundations already exist, and the first stones have already been laid. Everyone has a responsibility to add their own stone as soon as they have the opportunity and consciousness to do so.

We will have to invent new ways of organising ourselves in our societies, we will inevitably have to choose a new framework, mix thousands of innovations and inventions, adapting them to real living conditions, and developing everything in such a way as to gradually reduce the importance of what we do not like, without destroying it, and by making new measures emerge in parallel and giving them more and more weight (a bit like for renewable energies or organic food). The chances of success will depend above all on the direction taken. It is not so much the accounts and statistics that matter, but rather an attitude of openness to new ideas, without seeking to combat what has already been achieved.

All this is being built and will continue to be built in parallel and, like the web, much further away from hierarchies, structures, authorities and particular monopolies. Legislation will follow, or lose some of its role. It is therefore essential to think outside the box, to create independently of the current system, and as locally as possible at the outset. What works best will spread and perhaps become widespread.

In this respect, what happened at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect demonstration of the speed of transformation and adaptation that we have at our disposal for the future. Everything that was created in a hurry to produce masks on a large scale or on a small scale is proof that conversions or reorganisations could happen very quickly in many other areas. Industries have managed to abandon their usual production overnight to adapt to the urgency of the moment. If they are capable of this, they demonstrate that our entire industrial and economic system can, in much less time than we imagine, change direction and produce something other than useless, polluting goods, etc., abandoning the pursuit of profit and seeking to provide as many people as possible with items that are truly necessary.
And if we can do it temporarily, we can do it lastingly. Only bad ill will could prevent us from doing so.

4. Some examples of concrete changes to come in society

a - Participatory democracy

It is becoming increasingly clear how powerless politicians are in the face of all the current issues and the interdependence of multiple powers on the regional, national, international and global stages. What's more, they are often subject to economic powers, which are themselves dictated by the dictatorship of global shareholders. And that's not to mention the fact that most of them have yet to grasp the scale and urgency of the upheavals that need to be made. We will inevitably have to reach a stage where democracy is more participatory, but also where citizens are more involved in the practical management of their communities. Many new forms of participation could well emerge from citizens, without having to go through the institutional sphere, legislation, etc. This can already be seen in the new alternatives mentioned above, such as buying groups, grouped housing, transition network, repair cafés, LETS, Skills exchange networks, etc. Where necessary, legislation is adapted once new practices have already been adopted, when there is a risk of abuse, excesses, etc.
Active citizenship could well develop in the form of democracy applied in practice without being structured or imposed by the authorities.
Participatory democracy will be part of our new models. It is noticeable that it is often the public authorities themselves who call upon citizens' initiatives.

b - Political power will be transformed and regain power in the face of economic and financial power.

If citizens are to wield more power, they will also cause political power to disassociate itself from profit-based economic and financial spheres.
As we know, power corrupts, and so does money.
Power will therefore have to be shared and must not be a source of material wealth in any way; it must never be granted on a permanent basis. While some form of pyramidal hierarchy will probably remain largely necessary, it is even more necessary for this pyramid to resemble a Gaussian (bellshape) curve, with a blunt top and a more active base in terms of responsibilities.

c - Closed stock market

On a completely different level, one might suspect that stock exchanges will have to close one day, that capitalism will have to crumble to allow humanity to evolve.
We can hope that it will be shareholders who will decommission the stock exchanges, but it is to be feared that it will be a collapse of the system that will lead to the disappearance of its worst aspects, including the stock market.
The stock market is inherently incompatible with a healthy economy. It is completely disconnected from the principles of reality. It is at the heart of the problem, the source of speculation, managed by unscrupulous individuals.

d - Disappearance of taxes

In the long term, if the stock markets close, if income from work disappears, if profit disappears, if the state takes back control of money creation, the entire tax system will become obsolete. We will be forced to invent a new form of economy. It will no longer be the prices of products on the stock market that will matter, but the ecological footprint of this new economy.

e - Democratic companies will multiply and even become widespread

Democratic companies, and cooperatives in particular, function better, with higher productivity, and even make more profit than traditional companies with external shareholders. The higher the income of senior executives, and CEOs in particular, and the greater the multiple of their base salary, the less effective they are. The more people in high places are focused on profit, the less they are focused on anything other than their own profit. Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson devoted an entire chapter to this in their book *"The Spirit Level - Why Equality is Better for Everyone"* (2010), Penguin Publisher, [176] - [see Ref 10].

In a lecture (in French - already cited) in Brussels in 2014, Frédéric Laloux presented his book *Reinventing Organizations* (2015), which discusses a new type of enterprise, even more advanced than cooperatives or democratic enterprises [177] - [see Ref 40]. I strongly recommend watching it.
Improving the functioning of these companies depends on the development of each of their employees. Hierarchy disappears almost entirely. The company structure operates on a network basis, and each employee is given maximum responsibility. The human aspect becomes paramount, both for colleagues and for customers. These companies are doing better financially and tend to grow easily.

* * *
I am only citing a few possible examples here. They are in the air, I have not invented anything, and many others will be added. In mentioning them, I want to show that by shifting our perspective, we can imagine anything. The key is to understand where and how to start in order to initiate new practices and accelerate those already underway, without creating new problems or resistance among citizens or those in power. This is where a much more psychological approach comes in, which will be the subject of parts 4 and 5 of this book.

And if references such as the disappearance of the stock market or the disappearance of taxation seem far too utopian to you, remember that most of the social and human advances we currently enjoy were, until very recently, pure utopias.

F) DECREASE OF THE ROLE OF MONEY

1. Evolution of mentalities

Just as decoupling money from work and from the pursuit of profit, if we were all able to give money back its essential role, removing all the roles that pervert its use, this would lead to a de facto transformation of economic, fiscal, financial, and labour systems.

This means taking utopia one step further by abandoning our denial of our current conceptions of money, overcoming our beliefs about the apparent material impossibility of this, and changing our conditioning and our laws to achieve it.

We are too inclined to believe that certain aspects of society are unchangeable, that humans are imperfect, that it has always been this way. And so, asking questions is unnecessary, and trying to change our habits is vain. Business as usual.

Let's take another detour to look at male domination. Immobilism in mentalities towards our social system is parallel to that concerning injustices against women. The drifts that lead men to commit unjust acts against women are seen as being written into men's DNA. In this sense, the most widespread belief is that

this is inevitable and does not depend on willpower. For example, isn't prostitution said to be the oldest profession in the world? Yet thinking this way would mean that slavery, the death penalty, colonisation, and in the same vein, rape, incest, paedophilia, war, concentration camps, genocide, etc. are also inevitable.

This denial of the possibility to evolve means that, even if these injustices are explicitly condemned on moral grounds, they are implicitly accepted. And even if attitudes such as gallantry, politeness and overt kindness attempt to convey a sense of recognition or respect for women, the concrete reality is still too often tinged with innuendo, humour, lack of consideration, condescension and injustices that demonstrate contempt, abuse, ostracism, lack of understanding, authoritarianism, or paternalism. The following video, *"I've lived as a man & a woman - here's what I learned"* (15 minutes 30 seconds) is very enlightening on this subject. It does not prove anything, but the testimony of the speaker, Paula Stone Williams, gives serious food for thought. [178] - [see Ref 3].
And if that piqued your interest, don't hesitate to watch this other video*, "What I realised about men -- after I transitioned genders"* (13 minutes 20 seconds). She goes even further in her explanations and examples in this lecture: [see Ref 3].
Paula Stone Williams sums it up well when she addresses men about their privileges and the difficulties women face in taking their place:

> *"You started closer to the finish line than anyone else."* [179]

However, shifting perspectives, provoking insights, making the implicit explicit, and experimenting with new behaviours could completely upset our mentalities. Because these unfair behaviours have little or nothing to do with men's genetic heritage. And abandoning them is in everyone's interest, including those who, from their perspective, see no advantage in abandoning them.

The Weinstein affair was a trigger that is increasingly enabling women to denounce all these negative aspects they endure. And once denounced and recognised by most women and a part of the men, it becomes increasingly difficult for those who still manifest them to continue in this direction.

I think the same can be said for money. People are beginning to denounce the total inconsistency of the fact that eight people (in 2019) alone hold the same wealth as that which the poorest half of humanity has to contend with. But we continue to marvel at the top three on the list, who, in 2019, became even richer, gaining tens of billions of pounds in the space of a few months.

The more the implicit inconsistencies associated with money are expressed explicitly and on a large scale, the more difficult it will become to conceive of simply getting rich as fair. This will affect the richest people first, the elites in our society. But it will eventually also affect the middle classes, who are also quietly participating in the world of finance by holding portfolios of shares on the stock market that inflate their wealth at the expense of all those who own nothing or almost nothing.

The idea is not to declare which economic areas should be dismantled, nor how to achieve this, but rather to express a direction which, if chosen, when chosen, will naturally lead to new levels of understanding that will bring about shifts in mentalities, changes in attitudes, the adoption of new behaviours that will affect the entire functioning of our economy. Once again, progress will not come so much from the authorities, laws or international agreements, but rather from the way in which each individual evolves in the use of their wallet, their possessions and, above all, in relation to their role in the community.

2. The true role that money should have

Money will simply have to return to its basic role: to be used to exchange apples for pears, things that cannot be added together. Basically, it is no more complicated than that. It must serve as an intermediary, both in the sense of giving a common value to two things that cannot be added together, and in the sense of broadening the range of possible exchanges beyond the notion of barter, so that goods and services can be distributed according to needs. In this context, it cannot be an end in itself; it should remain a simple means of exchange and lose all the values currently attached to it: profit, recognition, status, privilege, survival.
If we understand this, if we simultaneously move towards a universal allowance, and if we manage to decouple money from work, then accounting and financial aspects will be greatly reduced, or even disappear from most areas of society.
I am not saying that this will be easy. But I am confident that those who have changed their perspective will find it much easier to find ways to implement this. And it will not be economists, bankers, scientists or politicians who will lead this, but many citizens who will create new initiatives outside the economic context, thus promoting a natural shift towards a new way of life that is much more independent of the economic world.

a - Reducing the utilisation and role of money

Reducing the utilisation of money does not imply a vow of poverty, but a return to greater simplicity, humility and sobriety, where we become capable of meeting our needs without being subject to our impulses and addictions, thereby allowing others to do the same, all others.

It is possible to learn to reduce the use of money. It is possible to break out of financial frameworks and learn to share much of what has been monetisable until now.

This involves reintroducing and even generalising the concepts of giving free of charge, exchange, donation, sharing, recycling, repair and recovery or renovation, as well as mutual aid, collaboration, cooperation, generosity, selfless service, etc. It also means reducing our activities of buying, selling, seeking profit, or saving for ourselves, and moving away from actions such as consuming, throwing away, accumulating, hoarding, collecting, etc. The culture of avalanches of gifts and expensive festivities will also be questioned. There are other ways to celebrate an event and honour those around us.

Many families already live according to these criteria, and this is spreading more and more rapidly as the media begins to regularly report on new initiatives in these areas.

Material goods that are not essential to our survival and basic comfort should never remain in our hands and should be circulated. Conversely, non-material goods – intellectual, spiritual and affective – are destined to grow.

We are in the age of information technology, which allows for the virtually free exchange of knowledge and cultural exchanges in many areas. The material abundance in which most people in Western countries live should be accompanied by an awareness that leads to learning moderation and sobriety, in parallel with the development of non-commercial exchanges.

An excellent source of information for learning this is Julien Vidal's initiative, already mentioned, via his website *"Ca commence par moi"* and the two books he has published. [180] - [see Ref 34]

b - Learning to exchange without counting

When we move away from the logic of everything being monetisable, it also becomes possible to learn to give and receive without counting. We move away from accounting, competition, competitiveness, comparison, rivalry, power relations, evaluation and constant judgement.
A good is shared with or given to others simply because it is available and others need it. A service is rendered to others or to the community simply because it is necessary and because the person offering it has the skills and availability to do so, considers it fair and sensible, and believes it brings something positive to their life, not materially, but psychologically or spiritually.

In this context, it becomes possible for some to give more and others to receive more, simply because they are in a position to do so. There is nothing to evaluate, measure or compare. There are no accounts to be rendered. And functioning in this way can avoid a lot of conflict and mistrust.

It will therefore be our circumstances, skills and needs that will define what we give and what we receive.

This is nothing more than the generalisation of what part of the population already practises.

c - The decreasing importance of money in our lives

And it is likely that we will increasingly be able to do without money in areas that do not concern survival.

Education, culture, healthcare and transport, which are already heavily subsidised, could become completely free. This may also apply to access to water and, later on, access to energy and even housing. This could happen quickly in some areas (education, for example, is already largely free or subsidised). In terms of mobility, the introduction of free public transport in Luxembourg from 2020 across the whole country is a first, and an example that will certainly be copied in other countries and could become widespread more quickly than we imagine. Energy, however, cannot really be declared free of charge as long as it is not 100% renewable.

Imagine if art, education and culture as a whole were no longer dependent on commercial exchanges and became freely and completely accessible to all. And what if copyright were only used to protect the work and the artist, regardless of their financial status? Imagine the evolutionary leap that this could bring about. The internet already gives us a glimpse of this thanks to existing platforms (such as Wikipedia, or free university distance learning via MOOCs). Imagine a culture free from money, advertising and competition between artists. Imagine that anyone could become an artist and that the success of their art no longer depended on those who invest money to sell or distribute it, but rather on their talent, their enjoyment of their discipline and the recognition they could hope to achieve. Imagine that you no longer have to pay to take a course, go to university, buy every book imaginable (via digital versions), or learn to pursue your passion. This would give the majority of the population the opportunity to make a giant leap forward in their education, their cultural level, their level of fulfilment, and above all, the level of what they could give back to society through this personal evolution. And this could only benefit society as a whole.

PART THREE:

THE CONTEXT OF CHANGE

Transforming society is everyone's business and must be done at all levels, whether individual, local or global. However, and I will explain this in many ways, it is necessary for this to start at the individual level.
Looking at the context in which change can take place helps us to better realise this. And to realise it better, let's start with the global context. Wealth inequalities appear to depend on laws, the economy and finance, but in reality they depend on each of our behaviours. Because the inertia of the world of power and the unwillingness of the richest to share their wealth do not bode well for any change in the near future, and may well, on the contrary, cause the situation to worsen further. It is our individual participation that needs to be questioned.

A) AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL

In most current democratic systems, there is a huge tendency towards inertia for those in political and economic power, not only in front of demands from an increasingly large section of the population, but also in front of the need to radically change the direction of decisions. This appears to be even more evident in the context of global warming and also at the level of all the economic and financial excesses. And the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted how quickly all the rules can be turned upside down in just 24 hours in the countries most affected. So it is clearly the will that has been lacking until now.

We are also currently reaching deadlocks in forming democratic governments in situations where the multitude of parties that cannot agree on a common programme are also unable to create a majority, and the entire political process is put on hold for months on end, with the increasing impotence of political representatives becoming ever more apparent.
This situation is occurring in more and more countries, making them almost ungovernable. Even when a coalition is formed to create a government, the political tendencies are so far apart that it largely paralyses the work of the government.

This inertia and paralysis of governance are due, first and foremost, to the functioning of the party system, which consists of opposing the parties against each other and using the balance of power as a basic rule to impose one's views on others. The system therefore consists of power being divided between the majority and the opposition, with roles regularly reversed during elections, or with coalitions alternating, ultimately functioning continuously with the foot on the brake pedal.

One solution to reduce the particracy could, for example, be to require each candidate in an election to be a member of two parties at the same time and to be loyal to the injunctions of one or the other party, as they choose, depending on the area concerned. This would make it much more difficult for parties to undermine each other.

Furthermore, a large proportion of elected representatives sorely lack the will to move forward on issues that call for abandoning certain obsolete practices in favour of new, fairer and more sustainable ones, because they themselves are direct beneficiaries of the advantages of this system and are among the most privileged (both in terms of power and material wealth), and because they pursue a policy of growth and profit-seeking that is inherently at odds with the need to reduce humanity's ecological impact on the environment and prevent the collapse of the economic system.

For others, the difficulty in changing their practices is linked to the fact that, even though they fully understand the seriousness of the issues we face, they themselves are still steeped in the values and conditioning of the current system. As a result, any changes they attempt to make only lead to them remaining within this system, as they are completely incapable of conceiving of any real ways out.

And among the few (though growing in number) who would be able to come up with the right alternatives, they are still too much in the minority, but they also face opposition from industrial and financial lobbies that dictate their own laws, as well as the extreme slowness of institutional processes, the growing presence of populist, nationalist or far-right politicians, and an increasingly complex legislative arsenal. They are even confronted with the incompetence, corruption or dishonesty on the part of some at all levels. Ultimately, it is rare for them to achieve their goals, at least presently.

It is therefore not from the political "arena" that we can expect to see much progress. At least, not under the current conditions of the exercise of power in Western democracies.

As we shall see later, crises can bring about very rapid changes in political decisions.
Gabriela Bucher, Executive Director *of Oxfam International*, in the article *"One person likely dying from hunger every 48 seconds in drought-ravaged East Africa as world again fails to heed warnings"* expresses this:

> *"People are starving not because the world lacks food or money, but for a dismal lack of political courage. Rich nations successfully, and rightly, raised over $16bn in one month to address the terrible crisis in Ukraine. They pumped over $16 trillion dollars into their economies in response to COVID-19 to support those in need. Countries can mobilise resources to prevent human suffering – but only if they choose to"* [181]

However, crises do not always lead to the best decisions.
This is the case, for example, with the role played by Western countries in relation to the crisis in Ukraine. While European Union countries are allocating funds to send aid to the Ukrainian people, to help Ukrainian refugees locally, or to provide relief to the most disadvantaged, who are indirect victims of the energy crisis and the resulting inflation, they are almost completely ignoring the other consequences of the war in Ukraine outside Europe. Aid to third countries – particularly the populations of the Horn of Africa – is virtually non-existent. In a way, it is still the beggar-thy-neighbor attitude, with international humanitarian solidarity at an all-time low.
On the other hand, this war is also prompting Western leaders, mainly from NATO and G7 countries, to release huge amounts of money to send weapons to Ukraine. This can only result in more deaths (hundreds of thousands of soldiers and local people), injuries, displacement, trauma, grief, destruction, and prolonging the suffering of an entire population, but also famine and shortages in other more distant countries (hundreds of millions of people threatened with famine), and global instability. And that's not to mention the nuclear danger, both in terms of the threat of nuclear weapons and the possibility of a disaster at a nuclear power plant.
The media remained silent for a long time on the subject of the budgets allocated to weapons sent to Ukraine by all kinds of countries.
Once again, figures illustrate this kind of inconsistency better than words. In October 2022, RTBF summarised the situation in the article in French *"Guerre en Ukraine : aide humanitaire et militaire, qui donne quoi ?"* *(War in Ukraine: humanitarian and military aid, who is giving what?)* by Miguel Allo with Ambroise Carton:

> *"From 24 January 2022 to 3 October, all countries combined, the total aid promised (humanitarian, military and financial) to Ukraine exceeds €105 billion. If we take military expenditure alone, the amount exceeds €41 billion. It should be noted that these are commitments made by various donors."* [182]

By way of comparison, in April 2022, the UN received $1.39 billion in donations to help the Horn of Africa combat famine, which was already threatening at least 20 million people at the time. [183]

41 billion for weapons that will directly cause tens of thousands of deaths and all the other consequences one can imagine; but which will indirectly destabilise world trade and greatly exacerbate famine in the Horn of Africa, for which only 1.39 billion has been raised and where we know that millions of deaths will occur. Spot the mistake!

Already in 2021, *Oxfam* denounced in the article in French *"Six-fold increase in people suffering famine-like conditions since pandemic began"*:

> *"Despite the pandemic, global military spending rose by $51 billion - enough to cover six and a half times what the UN says it needs to stop people going hungry."* [184]

A quote, the origin of which I do not know, expresses so well the logic we need to abandon with regard to these warmongering and deleterious policies:

> *"Blood cannot be washed away with blood."*

Because by continuing in this way – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a bomb for a bomb – we are only producing tens of millions of deaths and other victims, and we are persisting in implementing strategies that will lead humanity to its downfall.

Political decision-making is therefore far from rising to the current challenges, both in terms of its number and its scale.

B) BRINGING ABOUT POLITICAL CHANGE THROUGH CITIZEN MOVEMENTS

> *"The illusion is to think that politics is what politicians do. We know that they are subject to economic interests. We must act elsewhere, find a different entry point."*
> From the article (in French) in Le Temps newspaper *"Martín Caparrós à la rencontre des forçats de la faim" (Martín Caparrós meets the hunger's prisoners)* by Isabelle Rüf, (2015), quoting Martin Caparrós. [185]

And so far, faced with political and economic inertia, a too large part of the citizen movements continues to head towards opposition actions: demonstrations, petitions, strikes and boycotts. However, in too many cases, the balance of power is so uneven that all resistance actions consist more of making noise or stirring up air than actually having any real effect. It even happens that millions of people demonstrate or sign petitions without this having any impact on the decisions they are trying to oppose.
Not only is this often ineffective, but in some cases it can even reinforce the policies that these movements oppose, as well as the population's sense of powerlessness. For, when the balance of power is uneven, opposition serves to strengthen the power of the strongest and keep the weakest powerless. Resisting what is happening only serves to stimulate it to persist.
And in front of the absence of results, there is a risk of resorting to increasing violence. We saw this with the "yellow jackets" movement (in France), and we will soon see it with the mobilisations to fight global warming.

Demonstrations, petitions and civil disobedience will therefore only lead to extremely slow progress, unless the power of the people expressing themselves proves to be very significant (which is not yet the case) and those in power are then forced (in terms of the balance of power) to reconsider their position in order not to lose face. And any successes achieved could prove to be only temporary if the elected representatives or leaders in question are replaced. We can cite the examples of the United States and

Brazil, where in recent years, all the advances that had been implemented in previous years have been dismantled one by one following the arrival of new people in power.

Even if the opposition within the population were to prove strong enough to force a change in political decisions, this would reverse the balance of power but maintain it. Yet it is precisely this balance of power that is one of the sources of such blatant inequalities and the slowness of all decision-making processes. Reversing trends rarely brings about major upheavals in policy. A balance of power will remain that will continue to corrupt and/or paralyse those in power, regardless of their original good intentions. History is littered with such situations.
And as long as this balance of power persists, there will always be a threat of it being overturned, thus allowing a return to the previous situation.

Furthermore, the omnipresence of a balance of power requires enormous amounts of energy, time and money to be maintained. Holding on to power is in itself a considerable obstacle in order to progress in democracies as we know them. As soon as the election is over and the governments are formed, elected officials already devote considerable energy to preparing the ground for the next elections. Not in a direct campaign, but each of their choices and each of their public comments is coloured by their intentions to be re-elected at the next election.

Similarly, very long-term projects are rarely undertaken, because from one election to the next they can simply be cancelled or shelved if the opposition returns to power.

And that's not to mention the fact that relationships of domination and submission are often two sides of the same coin. Taking power away from those who abuse it and giving it to those who have been submitted to it may not solve the problem. It simply reverses the roles while keeping the same rules of the game. And this also applies between parties: when the opposition comes to power, it is rare to see any profound change in governance. Those who come to power too often end up acting in the same way as those they fought against and replaced. It is the endless repetition of political alternation.

Yet change is possible, but it depends much less on the political affiliation of elected officials than on the choices, actions and initiatives of each citizen.

The more the level of awareness evolves in a society, the more this is reflected at the level of political power. It is not the other way around. And it is not so much the elections that will define this evolution through the choice of elected officials, but the fact that elected officials, whatever their political affiliation (except for certain reactionary parties), are truly carried by the masses. And when the masses mobilise as one individual in a certain direction, governance moves in more or less the same direction. It is no longer a question of a balance of power, but of a form of collective intelligence where everyone is moving in the same direction.
Elected representatives then automatically become the spokespersons for citizens and the managers of the system, no longer seeking to misuse their power for their own interests or to go round in circles doing things as they have always been done. This evolution is intrinsic to the evolution of mentalities among the population. Elected representatives – except in situations of dictatorship where the balance of power is extreme – adapt to the will of the citizens, if this is expressed in actions. Thus, the more citizens evolve, the more elected representatives are carried by these citizens and evolve in the same direction, more or less quickly depending on the party in power, but despite everything ineluctably.

It should be noted that left-wing parties, despite defending causes that are more humane or humanistic than those linked to the market and profit, still operate within the balance of power. This is why, when such policies come to power, they struggle to create solidarity and cooperation among the population, even though this is what they defend. They must therefore content themselves with creating laws to protect the weakest rather than promoting attitudes that would encourage everyone to provide help and support to

their neighbours, their friends and family, and their community. Right-wing parties consider that left-wing policies create a culture of state handouts.
And so, when left-wing policies are implemented and trade unions have a lot of power, the state ends up providing aid (in the form of money and institutions) to the sick, the unemployed, migrants, pensioners, etc.
In a way, the more politics moves to the left, the more compensation, pensions, allowances (unemployment, family), insurance, holiday pay, and free access to certain services there will be; and the higher the amounts will be, and the more advantageous the conditions for receiving them will be.
In this way, left-wing politicians may reduce poverty and suffering on the one hand, but on the other hand, they do not really stimulate solidarity. They create rights that mean that everyone has to contribute financially (through taxes) to help the most disadvantaged. However, the assistance provided ultimately turns out to be much more financial, administrative and material than human.
This could lead, for example, to an elderly person with a very low income being given the right to be admitted to a nursing home, but ultimately being mistreated there due to the negligence, incompetence, indifference or even bad faith of some of the staff working there. (This is just one possible example, not a generalisation.)
This illustrates, in a way, that trying to inject humanism into a system where power relations and capitalism remain the reference values is practically impossible. As long as we don't dig deep enough, as long as we don't peel away the layers until we get to the core of the power struggle, we only solve problems superficially, and in doing so, we reform them, but we don't make them disappear.

C) PAN BALANCE: MOVING TOWARDS THE ALTERNATIVE

A genuine change in society cannot therefore come about through the fight against power and the excesses of money, but rather by rehabilitating healthy modes of functioning that can develop without their use, and without waiting for the public authorities to take the initiative.

It works like a pan balance scale. In a pan balance scale, when we remove the weight that we placed on the first side of the scale – the problematic side – and put it on the other side of the scale – the solution side – we have a double rebalancing effect. The more weight we put on the side of the constructive alternative, the more the destructive system loses weight and eventually gives way to the new. In this context, the forces at play are of a different nature and therefore do not oppose each other, in the sense that it is no longer a question of mobilising to fight, oppose, destroy, flee or submit to destructive power, but of withdrawing from it by exercising our own power – which has almost nothing to do with what we are leaving behind. It is a matter of leaving the game, so to speak.

This does not mean that what is harmful will disappear. It means that the more we invest in new participatory and positive means, the less necessary it will be to use means of rebellion, pressure and coercion, or even punishment, so: power relations. Because in the latter, it is the strongest who keeps the other under his thumb, and if he does not maintain his strength, he loses his authority. Whereas in the system of pan balance – which respects the rules of democracy – investing in one side creates a ripple effect, without forcing anyone to leave the other side. But for this to happen, it is essential to understand how important it is that global change is the result, first and foremost, of individual change.

Indeed, it is vain to attempt to achieve lasting and harmonious goals on a large scale with people who have not made any progress in this direction individually. For, attempting to compromise, to move towards consensus and democracy, while keeping the constant risk of falling back into our instinctive behaviours based on power relations, means putting in place a system – or perpetuating the existing one – that will sooner or later allow for an unexpected return of all the abuses and violence generated by power relations in the broadest sense of the concept. The news abound with such situations.

It is essential to understand that global change will be much more difficult and slow (if not impossible) to achieve without prior individual change. This probably does not apply to everyone. But it is necessary for a sufficiently large proportion of the population to commit to this. And personally, I do not know what proportion this should be. Probably, the more people who work to change, the faster the transition to a fairer and more sustainable society will be. In this sense, each person who is conscious that they have a role to play in this process and who is in a position to do so will be able to judge the importance of taking the step and persevering on this path.
And until a sufficient proportion of people understand this, we will remain at an impasse, unable to progress, continuing to educate our children in ways that perpetuate archaic tendencies;
- on the one hand, by always wanting to look back so as not to repeat all the horrors we have already created, while continuing to repeat them without really understanding why, and while blaming others for the blockages. Because recognising a problem is not the same as solving it;
- and on the other hand, by making a lot of noise that has no effect, or too little, or too slow, while believing that we are doing what is necessary, but without seeing any results.

D) OUR SMALL INDIVIDUAL STEPS ARE CAPABLE OF GENERATING BIG CITIZEN TIDES

Returning to the initial subject of profit, the idea is not to abolish all the rules of finance with a wave of a magic wand. The idea is to understand that: if they work to some extent - rather badly than well; not only do they stimulate all kinds of injustice, but they also lead us straight to disaster; and that it is therefore necessary to function outside these rules – without contravening or opposing them – and to build something that will enable us to abandon them little by little, with as little damage as possible, without having to fight or infringe them, or fight those who persist in defending them.
Nothing, absolutely nothing, obliges us to consume, waste, pollute, watch television, connect to social networks, fly, be a shareholder, follow fashion, consume the products of multinationals, operate on advertising, or have an account in a bank that does not respect any ethics. Each of us has the freedom, on a daily basis, to make conscious choices that will help us disassociate ourselves from destructive capitalism and work to reduce our ecological footprint. We cannot demand that the authorities legislate to achieve this if we do not begin to make the effort ourselves. On this subject, I suggest you read the article (in French) from the programme *#Investigation* (already mentioned above), *"Sur les routes cachées de notre argent : quand nos banques investissent dans le sale, le toxique et le guerrier"* (On the hidden paths of our money*: when* our banks invest *in dirty, toxic and warring industries*) (2020) by RTBF, written by Emmanuel Morimont. [186] - [see Ref 29]

> Note: The full text of the programme can also be found at the five other links provided with the programme link [see Ref 29].

This programme perfectly illustrates This program perfectly illustrates how far our decisions about how we spend our money impact the way the world works. It also shows how counterproductive it is to criticise or fight against a system in which we are complicit in so many ways.

The more we reduce at the maximum our participation in the fool's game of consumption, while investing ourselves in all aspects of citizen and solidarity-based society, the more we will contribute, at our own scale, to reverse the balance of the pans of the scale.

And on a more global level, the more individuals and communities are able to disengage from the commercial and financial spheres, the less impact these will have on the world.

Competition – involving power struggles – and enrichment in terms of possessions will thus disappear from our value systems, to be replaced by cooperation and enrichment in terms of knowledge, creativity

and personal development. This is what is beginning to emerge in the concepts of sustainable development and Gross National Happiness, as opposed to growth and GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

And depending on how each individual evolves, new ideas, novel solutions and creative alternatives will then be able to emerge much more easily. And if this happens at the right moment, it will spread very quickly.

One example that I find compelling in this regard is "flygskam" - the shame of flying - which is currently happening in Sweden (according to 2019 news) and has already reduced flights in that country by 3.8% in nearly a year - including 8 to 10% for domestic flights - and is beginning to spread beyond its borders. Now added to this is köpskam – the shame of shopping – which is also likely to spread among the Swedish population before affecting global consumerism as a whole. [187]

Many people around the world have already refused to fly for quite a few years, but they remain a small minority and do not have much influence on those around them.
What is happening in Sweden seems different to me. The additional factor seems to be shame, which is not necessarily a very constructive asset. Except that it shows that those who feel ashamed are at a stage where they realise their responsibility when they fly and are therefore becoming more conscious of the consequences of their actions on a personal level. And it is then a sense of responsibility (and not shame) that drives them to want to avoid flying.
I also think that the term is misleading. It seems more likely to me that in reality, these choices are more related to a form of consciousness than to shame.
This trend seems to be snowballing. The fact that it is being reported in the media outside Sweden could well be proof of this, while also stimulating the movement beyond borders and thus accelerating the process. This gives us hope that in a few years (it could happen very quickly), 90% of people will be concerned by flygskam, which could mean that air travel would decrease by at least 50% in the medium term, or even significantly more if those who stop flying are among those who previously flew very regularly.
And if this phenomenon is possible for air travel, it is possible for all subjects in all areas.
Therefore, no political or commercial decisions to cancel flights, increase prices or impose other restrictions should be necessary, as it will be the citizens themselves who will have deserted the airports. And if decisions are taken by the authorities in the same direction, they will of course help to accelerate the process, but they will not be the source of the main transition movement.

Similar actions could be envisaged in the field of advertising. If a mass movement were to decide, not to reject advertising, but to refuse to buy and use anything that is advertised (advertising that is neither educational, cultural nor informative, but purely profit-oriented), we would very quickly see this type of advertising simply disappear from our horizons.
It is quite simple to do when you have distanced yourself from advertising channels such as television, radio, magazines and mass social networks, and downloaded Adblock onto your computer. And it is made even easier if you reduce your consumption and avoid shopping in the great temples of consumerism.

It is not so much a question of abandoning certain habits as it is of adopting new ones. Those who no longer travel by plane generally choose to take the train or simply travel less or shorter distances. When you stop shopping, you learn to spend your free time differently and sometimes to make what you need yourself. Choosing to eat unpackaged, unprepared products sold by producers or through alternative channels allows us to completely change our perspective on "consumption".

The multitude of associations mentioned earlier in the text is another example where citizens are taking the initiative to create a different form of governance. In the longer term, this could completely transform the organisation of our societies or communities and have a snowball effect elsewhere, with citizen participation becoming much more important than it is today.

In this context, the forces of the economic and financial world as we know them today would decline because the protagonists involved in them would gradually and voluntarily become involved elsewhere. This would start with consumers reducing their purchases and consuming differently, followed by small shareholders, some of whom have already chosen the alternative, and then by public authorities, managers and, finally, the largest shareholders.

When we understand these issues, we realise that the transition will not come about through regulation of the system, or through bans, coercion, etc. imposed from above, but that the reshaping of the rules will be much more a consequence, at the level of the law, of changes already established in society, initiated by the population itself. And the less coercive power is needed, the more participatory democracy can naturally take hold. It will be a shift in mentalities and behaviours.

This will not happen without conflicts. It is likely that even if entire communities manage to create alternatives without resorting to the balance of power and by gaining the support of part of the ruling classes, there will still remain violent or at least shocking and unjust reactions from those who do not subscribe to these new approaches. But they will not be able to destroy these new developments as long as the rest of the community refuses to confront them directly.

In my opinion, the scale of change at the individual level is by no means negligible. We need to stop believing that our small steps will not have enough weight to ultimately bring about global change. For it is precisely this belief that keeps us inert and makes us cowardly and irresponsible. The current immobilism is much more a consequence of everyone's immobilisms than the result of a lack of political will. By waiting for our neighbour to take the first step, we are preparing to wait for eternity.

By removing the aspect of fight, struggle, and opposition from the new approaches that are being implemented, we end up gaining the support of those we would have fought if we had chosen to act in a balance of power. Not immediately, of course. It works little by little. We will gain the support of one person, then another, as we see the resisters becoming increasingly polarised around their privileges. But there comes a point when their privileged situation or their position of defending those privileges becomes untenable.

New individual attitudes will thus have global consequences. I use the future tense because all this is not yet fully apparent, but millions of people are already on these alternative paths, which are becoming increasingly alternative.
And this is bound to happen in the coming years or decades. We no longer have a millennium ahead of us to make this journey, at most a generation, but probably much less.

Conversely, when new practices are initiated locally, they may be slow to get off the ground, but the acceleration then occurs at lightning speed.

The day when a group of individuals voluntarily participate in alternative economic means at almost every level of their lives, the day when this group becomes the majority in a region or country, voluntarily and sustainably, it will be inevitable that it will be copied and that it will become widespread. And some countries are already well on their way to achieving this.

This will probably happen initially among the most privileged countries. For this is where the need to change attitudes is most pressing, but also where conditions are most favourable, as a sufficient number of people are not in "survival" mode. And when attitudes evolve, the social landscape transforms.

E) CITIZEN PROFILES: THE CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE

"There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew." Marschall McLuhan

The following (in italics and indented) was written and published in 2004 or 2005 and slightly modified in 2020. These lines were included in a book published for several years on my website https://sechangersoi.be/EN/EN-home.htm. I am taking the liberty of repeating these lines, as my perception of reality has been confirmed in this regard. I believe it is necessary to understand that the revolution we need is so profound and enormous that it will have to be initiated at many different levels, and by every citizen. In the following paragraphs, I describe five types of citizen profiles, the first of which is completely inactive in terms of developing new alternatives. And it seems increasingly clear to me that the societal transformations we will be called upon to implement in order to maintain human civilisation on Earth will require us to leave the first profile behind and embrace all the others at the same time. However, until now, although there has sometimes been partial overlap between certain profiles, it has been rare for citizens to evolve in more than two, or exceptionally three of them.

Society is composed of a wide range of diverse citizen attitudes. Although none of these are set in stone, we could outline the idea of five broad trends in the ways people position themselves in relation to the world and whether or not they take action accordingly. Each attitude corresponds to a perception of belonging to the world, which itself stems from education, culture, experience, personality, etc. None is better or worse than the others. We all navigate between some of them to a greater or lesser extent. The following description may seem stereotypical: it is simply a perception of reality that needs to be nuanced.

1. First of all, the vast majority of citizens feel powerless in the face of world events. They are convinced that only political leaders and the heads of multinational corporations have power. They see no reason to fight, and some even prefer to take advantage of the system while they still can, especially those who benefit from the current system.

Many of them are preoccupied with their jobs, their families, their health or other problems that life can bring. Taking a broader view, however, they are concerned about current events, the global situation and the more local problems that result from it. And while they may not yet feel the need to get personally involved in bringing about change, they are not far off. There comes a day when one too many corpses seen on the news during dinner leaves you feeling sick .

2. Alongside this is the world of activism.
Activism can be useful in curbing the damage affecting society on all sides, and in devising and implementing alternatives. Work of this kind, when done well, is essential. And within activism itself, we can also see several different profiles.

In many cases, the fight against the capitalist system consists of expressing opposition to the system. The goal is either to influence the direction of political or commercial decisions, or to mobilise the masses to put pressure on leaders and get what they want. However, while this struggle still has a certain role to play, it is no longer enough. Forcing leaders to make better decisions is useful as long as the pressure is maintained, but this pressure must be accompanied by many other initiatives that will create a situation where it is no longer necessary to function under this balance of power.

At the same time, some organisations, within the framework of other commitments and through means other than protest, are doing remarkable constructive work. This is painstaking, long-term work. It may concern, among other things, pacifism, with, for example, work for disarmament or for

a peace tax. Or it may concern the environment, with, for example, recycling, the search for alternative energy sources, the preservation of natural heritage, etc. It may concern humanitarian interventions following wars, natural disasters, famines, etc. In fact, there are many actions in very different fields.

(Note: Greta Thunberg was still in her cradle when these lines were written, and global warming was not yet a hot topic in the news at the time. Greta is one of the protesters, but she does undeniable lobbying work that has brought her the success we know today. She therefore works on two levels.)

However, in the activist world, it is often difficult to distinguish between working to create alternatives and rebelling against what is wrong. Some activist initiatives are more like a way to let off steam or ease one's conscience. While those who create alternatives are moving things forward, many actions such as certain demonstrations, strikes, petitions, etc. have lost their effectiveness. Some of them manage to reduce the damage or even achieve progress, but not all of them.

A word about demonstrations
These remain the most visible and common among the more or less traditional types of action we encounter. Unfortunately, they follow one another and are too often similar.
While all our current social rights were won through strikes and protests over the last two centuries, they are now being dismantled, one by one, despite protests. The balance of power that enabled workers to impose their will in negotiating their rights has now shifted. On the one hand, 'globalisation' makes it possible to use cheaper and more exploitable labour elsewhere. On the other hand, we are witnessing a drowsiness among citizens, through consumption and the hypnosis operated by the mass media, social networks and other virtual options offered by the internet, which make them rest on their laurels about the rights they are in the process of losing. Thereby, militant work, and in particular demonstrations, are beginning to spin in vain like a worn-out screw.
As a result, few demonstrations succeed in achieving their claimed objectives. Very often, their objectives are no longer linked to improving a situation, as was the case in the 20th century, but rather to preventing its deterioration. Sometimes it even seems that demonstrations are multiplying, but the number of demonstrators is decreasing with each one, as is their media reach and influence on decision-makers. To the point that it could even have the opposite effect to that hoped for. For example, when certain demonstrations – aimed at representing the opinion of the majority of the population in a country of around 11 million inhabitants such as Belgium – only manage to mobilise 1,000 participants, it is worth asking whether the message of the demonstration is not then becoming that the vast majority of the population is not at all concerned by the demonstrators' objective.

Another problem is the coverage of all these actions in the mass media. Sometimes a cultural event attended by 1,000 people is the subject of a five-minute report on the television news, while a protest attended by 10,000 people is not even mentioned. And even if the message is broadcast, it is often lost in the flood of news items and generally has only a fleeting effect on viewers, failing to produce the desired effect.

However, if we do not succeed, on a personal level, in convincing those around us; how can we convince "citizens" and "authorities" with demonstrations?

There is also a risk that certain actions will give those involved a clear conscience. We may sometimes be tempted to 'at least do something', even if it's useless, and then think that we have done the right thing, or that we cannot do more. But if we invest energy in actions that have no chance of success, we simply risk sowing the seeds of our future discouragement. And, at the same time, we will feed the belief that action is pointless, that we are powerless in the face of the omnipotence of the people we oppose.

Paradoxically, while demonstrations do not always have the desired effect on the outside world, they play an important role within the activist community, as they bring together people who share a common goal and create solidarity.
Not only can they promote partnership (which is not always easy) between associations, but many demonstrations are an opportunity to meet, have fun, express oneself, and sometimes new initiatives can emerge.

There is another ambiguity concerning a significant proportion of activists who denounce everything that does not work. Indeed, they often deepen their knowledge of what's going on in the World and the areas in which they want to take action. On the other hand, they are not really aware that, alongside this, their own behaviour in society only favours the perpetuation of the system as it is. This is reflected in their consumption, but also quite simply in their "power relations" way of thinking. Proposing solutions based on the same way of thinking that created the problem will not solve anything.
The more we question ourselves as individuals, the more we will be able to establish consistency between our daily lives and the goals we defend in the context of alter-globalisation, and the greater our impact will be at all levels.

3. Far removed from the activist world, there are also a considerable number of people on a path of personal evolution. Few of them are activists (just as few activists are engaged in personal evolution). Most are questioning themselves personally, questioning their behaviour, their relationships, their way of thinking. At the same time, their political concerns are generally not very pronounced. While they are conscious that they are part of a world in turmoil, they are more concerned with their own problems. For these problems mask everything else and take up all the space. And their first priority remains to solve them.
We are generally incapable of looking at other people's problems when we are overwhelmed by our own. But once the problems have been overcome, if they are resolved in depth, The perception of the world is transformed, and an involvement with 'the whole' then derives almost automatically from it. People who have done serious work on themselves are likely to convey more authenticity, assertiveness, consistency and integrity. They are people who radiate more around them, who often have easier access to their creativity, and who are better at learning from their own experiences. In this sense, they potentially have just as much, if not more, to contribute to society as the group of activists.

4. The fourth group consists of socially active people:
- either on a small scale. This involves mutual aid, for example, between neighbours, between parents of schoolchildren, between members of clubs or associations. Their goal is to improve their immediate environment by giving of themselves and benefiting directly from the recognition of those around them;
- or on a large scale, doing enormous work in all kinds of humanitarian, social, educational or cultural organisations;
Although they are very active and efficient, these activities are not necessarily carried out within the broader context of any political agenda.
It is thanks to them, among others, that the decadent society in which we live does not sink completely into chaos.

5. Finally, I would distinguish a group of people who are often less militant or less involved in social action, but who are engaged in a spiritual journey.
For some of them, the God they believe in will save the world. If these people show kindness, it is more out of obedience than generosity.

Others adhere to new trends that convey the message that developing oneself spiritually helps the world to become a better place, or that praying for others brings them comfort.
The question is not to refute this, quite the contrary. However, even if it turns out that spiritual growth and prayer can help the world, this alone will not be enough if it is not translated into everyday actions. And in order to translate spiritual awareness into action, I believe it is important to go through a process of self-questioning that is more psychological in nature. We need to question our beliefs and conditioning, which also means becoming aware of some of our unconscious motivations, and this work is not part of spiritual development. I believe that spiritual elevation can lead to losing oneself if one is not well grounded, rooted and centred in one's own reality.

Each of us can recognise ourselves in one or another of these five major stereotypes of attitudes in society, or in several of them. Whatever position we hold among these citizens attitudes, we all need to cultivate consistency between our actions and our personal convictions, whether they be militant, spiritual, social, etc.

And in order for each of us to have more impact in our actions, regardless of how we approach and conceive of reality, I think it will be necessary to integrate several approaches at once. By combining these different attitudes, mainly activism and personal evolution, we can exponentially increase the efficiency of our actions, their reach, and the influence and contagion that come with authenticity, consistency of behaviour, and finally the solidarity and mutual aid needed to achieve this.
Indeed, I believe that in order to be agents of change, we cannot ignore four main types of conditions:
- The first is the choice of personal evolution: thoroughly questioning our beliefs, behaviours, relationships with others, ways of thinking, and values, unravelling conditioning and returning to our roots, even unconscious ones.
- The second is action in the field (social or co-creative (activist) action).
- The third is the philosophical, political and spiritual dimension, which consists of framing the first two dimensions as a whole, in relation to our belonging to a global world, to a whole, through information, reflection and positioning. This does not necessarily imply transcendence, nor does it exclude atheism.
- The fourth condition then becomes essential and consists of the consistency and integrity of our individual behaviours with the values we advocate in the other three approaches. This fourth approach is the result of the first three, and it is this that will enable us to have an impact on changes in the world.

PART FOUR:

THE CHANGE IN THE LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A) INTRODUCTION

When I created my website in 2004, entitled "Changing oneself to change the world" [188], virtually no one subscribed to such an approach, which was considered rather unrealistic. I was reassured later when I discovered Gandhi's quote:

> *"Be the change you want to see in the world."*

It seemed a little less radical, and more and more people were referring to it, even in the mass media.
Over the past decade, books, videos and conferences have been devoted to this topic. And it is no longer rare for this topic to come up in everyday conversation.
This means that in just 15-20 years, our mindsets have evolved much faster than they did in the decades before. Not everyone subscribes to this way of thinking about reality, but a very significant minority, which continues to grow, refers to it more and more.

In this context, the approach that seems most important to me in relation to the topics discussed in this document is much more related to the psychological attitude with which we approach them and act, and I believe that it is this attitude that will determine the potential success of our endeavours.

The themes addressed in this fourth part are avenues that I believe to be fundamental, even if I cannot claim to have a complete master of the subject or to be "right".
After all, they are only a series of avenues to explore.

They are not necessarily the best. But they are the ones I believe in most, the ones that make the most sense to me. I know that they do not stem from a logic of survival, which means that they are avenues that can lead to others, better ones, or that can evolve, where anything is possible, and it is in this context that I express them.

I also know that my reasoning can go even further, and every day I discover new aspects, new keys to understanding, through my experiences, my observations, my reading, my intuition, my reflection, and so on. I thought I could take these subjects much further. But I decided not to wait any longer before publishing, because I think that at this stage, it is already worth sharing. And that if I continue to hesitate, feed my doubts, wait for confirmation, I will never consider it finished, and I will never publish it.

And if I am expressing myself, it is because I am confident that I am not talking nonsense, even if certain aspects of this book may seem that way to some who read it. And I firmly believe that it may resonate with some who glimpse these notions, or even experience them intensely. It is time to talk about them, to put into words concepts that too often remain unsaid, or scattered without a common thread. It is time to make explicit connections between facts that, until now, we have tended to consider independent, and to shed light on our conditioning, our contradictions, our denials. I am not alone in doing so, as each approach highlights different aspects, but they can overlap or converge.

B) THE NEED TO RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL EVOLUTION AMONG A SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE POPULATION

I do not believe it is possible to cure the ills of our society or civilisation by reforming the system. It is necessary to shift the mentalities of the individuals who make up that society before we can really think about transforming it in depth. Everyone who participates in this process is important, regardless of their level of involvement. The following chapters may give you a clearer idea of this.
For, without a shift in attitudes, we will have to settle for minor reforms that will lead nowhere, even though the issues at stake are fundamental.

This learning process will take place on two levels, although the boundary between these two levels is not clear-cut. Firstly, it is a question of integrating new behaviours in relation to consumption, the use of money, waste, pollution, etc. Secondly, it will involve a more profound psychological evolution, which will be the result of the personal evolution of only a part of the population, but which will automatically spread and benefit everyone. We will discuss the more psychological aspect later on.

Giving up the pursuit of profit, money and material wealth can therefore only be the result of a transformation of mentalities that must be assimilated by every member of society. And this work affects absolutely everyone and every area of our lives.

For an indispensable metamorphosis of society awaits us. And it cannot happen through a dictatorship of the proletariat, or through any dictatorship at all, but because a sufficiently large part of the population will take on a new project in a concrete way (other than sporadically at the ballot box). It may seem unrealistic to envisage this. But that is without taking into account our rapid ability to adapt and the fact that the train is already moving and accelerating faster and faster. While the excesses and turmoil of the world are becoming increasingly noticeable, we are at a turning point where the consciousness of the population evolves also on an upward curve.
Every person who realises that we are at a critical juncture is forced to re-evaluate their beliefs, convictions and certainties.

1. Who is firstly concerned?

A priori, we are all concerned, simply because we are all, in one way or another, part of the problem. Being critical of all the failures leads nowhere if we do not realise, first and foremost, that we too are responsible, and that our greatest power is to act first at this level. Many people criticise and denounce, as if they were not part of the problem. However, we all have money, regardless of how much, and it is what we do with it – at least in part – that either keeps us stuck in the problem or leads us towards solutions. Does our money buy power, pollution, useless things, status? Does what we consume contribute to injustice, the unhappiness of others, global warming, the massacre of animals, the depletion of resources? Does our work contribute to consumerism, the profit machine, the manipulation or exploitation of other people? Where does it fall on the spectrum between harmful, superfluous, useful and essential? Are we conscious of the consequences of our every action, word and behaviour?

Starting to assume that we are part of the problem almost all the time is the starting point for seeking solutions. And that's not enough, it's just the starting point. Currently, around 20 to 40% of the population in Belgium, and maybe even in Europe and all Western countries, are at this starting point. I am completely unaware of what the situation is elsewhere.

It will probably be the youngest who evolve the fastest, and the schoolchildren and student movement initiated by Greta Thunberg is already an illustration of this. Even if it is clear that this does not contribute

concretely to the implementation of new ways of operating. It just shows that a growing part of the population wants to move in this direction, without always knowing how to make it happen.

Conversely, the older we get, the harder it is to ask ourselves the necessary questions. This is because conditionings are much more deeply rooted, making it much more difficult to break free from them.

And while this concerns us all, it concerns some more than others: the richest. Others are much less concerned: the poorest. And it is these two categories of people who will be the last to be able to evolve in their level of consciousness. For the former, their tendency to deny reality will push them to continue defending their privileges, or to propose solutions that only prolong the problem. or, at best, to share some of their wealth for worthy causes, while continuing to keep most of it and to enrich themselves. Or, for the latter, being in survival mode, they cannot feel directly concerned by large-scale problems or those that do not directly concern them. Moreover, it would be absurd and unfair to ask them to make efforts.

a - The wealthiest

Firstly, the richest and most conditioned people, i.e. those who work in environments most steeped in balances of power, materialism and consumerism (i.e. the world of banking, finance, advertising, senior management, lobbying, politics and part of the arts community) will be the ones who persist the longest and most tenaciously in denial and refusal to evolve. This is because they have every reason (largely unconscious) to deny the problems. No matter what information they have, and no matter how logical they are capable of being, most of them will neither want to see the problem for what it is nor seek a solution. At best, they will propose solutions that are still part of the problem. Yet, for the most part, they are the ones who still hold power in our society today.

A significant number of them maintain irresponsible attitudes that lead to the pursuit of policies of growth and war, nationalism and hatred of foreigners, consumerism and waste, which are still considered perfectly normal today, but which can only be condemned tomorrow. Some NGOs have already chosen to take legal action against the irresponsibility of certain political and economic representatives. For example, a Dutch citizens' association (Urgenda) took the Dutch government to court for its inaction on global warming and won its case in a final ruling confirmed by the country's Supreme Court in December 2019. [189]
Similarly, in 2021, four associations, backed by the signatures of two million citizens, took legal action against the French state for its inaction on global warming. [190]

It should be noted, however, that on the economic side, a growing minority of wealthy individuals are currently evolving in their understanding of the issues and are willing to take action in a more positive direction. Some are even asking to be taxed more, such as the American billionaires cited in the following article dated 24/06/2019: [191]
Others are investing in projects aimed at reducing global warming or in humanitarian projects. Just as we are beginning to see among business leaders and even business federations a desire to take action on global warming, reduce bonuses of all kinds, and even cut their salaries outright. There is therefore very clearly, and relatively recently, a shift in the level of awareness among people who have significantly more power, privileges and money, leading them to question these privileges, or at the very least, to try to act in ways that benefit others with their money. Even though, until recently, they were content to try to take maximum advantage of the system while destroying it. But this only concerns a minority of them.

And while these first steps may give us hope for bigger steps to come, it is important to realise that, for the most part, this remains very superficial. Some of them are willing to make an effort to start sharing. But as long as they keep their share of the pie, these will remain nothing more than good intentions. Because paying more tax, bequeathing their assets when they die, or investing half their assets in humanitarian

projects, while continuing to enrich themselves, shows how willing they are to make part of their assets available to the community, but also how little they question the fact that they alone possess so much money, or that they continue to make profits.
In this way, their generosity is more than offset by the opposite effect of the huge profits they continue to amass, which result in poverty, the exploitation of people on the other side of the globe, and the destruction of the environment.
True understanding would imply that they realise that this money does not really belong to them, and that it is therefore logical to give it back to those who are entitled to it.

> *"If you have a second pair of shoes and a poor man goes barefoot, you do not have to give them to him, but you have to give them back to him." Gregory the Great*

It should be noted, however, that in the news, it appears that this is accessible to at least two of them, as mentioned in the following articles from Le Dauphiné Libéré [192], the RTBF [193] and Bio à la Une [194].

Unfortunately, however, among the wealthiest and most powerful segment of the population, the majority retain a mentality that is rather similar to that of vultures. This has been the subject of several studies, which are described in the book (already mentioned) by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *"The Spirit Level - Why Equality is Better for Everyone"* (2010), Penguin Publisher, [195] - [see Ref 10].
And it turns out that it is becoming known that among the most powerful and richest people, we even find many traits of psychopathy, narcissism, and a blind pursuit of profit and power that imposes a loss of empathy and moral values. In 2012, a series of articles also mentioned this subject, including (in French): *"Le monde financier serait-il dirigé par des psychopathes?" (Is the financial world run by psychopaths?)* by Julie Calleeuw, published by RTBF. [196] - [see Ref 14].
This seemingly innocuous article (presented among thousands of daily news reports) provides key information that helps us better understand the extent to which our so-called democratic society entrusts enormous powers to people who are clearly incapable of using them wisely.

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in their book [197] give an idea of the consequences of the concentration of wealth and power at the top of the social pyramid. In a way, a CEO's motivation, if he wants to meet his company's objectives, should be to accept a reasonable salary. However, the opposite is true in reality. Most CEOs of large companies fight hard to obtain the most indecent salaries. And the appeal of the CEO position is much less about the potential to exercise skills, share experience, or motivate the company to be managed soundly, than it is about gaining more power and higher remuneration. There is therefore a good chance that the best candidates for such positions will not be rushing to apply and that they will be competing with people who are capable of putting their own interests before those of the company.

This can be seen in the results: higher-performing companies pay their CEOs less. This has been studied in the United States by MSCI (2016) [198] and in Europe by the Executive Remuneration Research Centre at Vlerick (2017) and mentioned in the newspaper "L'Echo" [199].

It is difficult to expect these people, who define their own privileges, to make choices that are completely contrary to their beliefs and values, namely to share and act for the good of others. Yet they are the ones who currently run the world.

And yet, remedying this situation will not involve taking away their power and money, nor influencing them directly. It will involve taking back our own power and transforming ourselves.

b - The poorest

And at the same time, at the other end of the social pyramid, billions of people live with the bare minimum or even less. It stands to reason that it is pointless to ask someone who is struggling to survive and

provide for their family to be part of a larger project to solve a problem that is bigger than themselves and whose resolution will not immediately solve their own problems. This is all the more true given that their ecological footprint is already very small to begin with.

The less wealthy are not part of the problem, they are among those who suffer from it. Asking them to make efforts in this context is not useful. On the other hand, if society changes, they will intrinsically be led to follow the movement and raise their level of consciousness.

And they will be the first to benefit from the progress to come, without having to be involved in the actions that initiate it.

c - The middle class

Among the rest of the population – the middle class in the broad sense of the term – the level of consciousness is constantly increasing. And there are already many people who are ready to act consciously to transform this system, even if they are still in the minority. And they have already begun. For the moment, it is mainly the younger generation who are driving the movement.

However, among those who are conscious of the need for radical change in society, some are more focused on demanding reforms from legislators than on making the effort to bring about modifications at the local, civic, and individual levels. For example, among those who demonstrate for the climate, a significant proportion consider themselves conscious of the issues because they have access to a great deal of information and believe that taking action means demonstrating. But it is clear that protesting is clearly not enough to combat climate change, and that their actions beyond making their voices heard, in the hope that politicians will decide and bring about the desired reforms, are still very limited. These people expect much more from the public authorities, and their individual efforts remain very modest. For many of them, apart from gathering information and signing petitions or taking part in demonstrations, their lifestyle has hardly evolved, and their ecological footprint remains enormous. This is not to judge them, but I think it is important to take this aspect into account. Protesting without taking parallel action serves little purpose and gives the illusion of contributing to the cause.

In addition, demonstrations are becoming more frequent, the number of demonstrators is exploding, and the improvements demanded of decision-makers are still not happening. This must also be taken into account.

> *"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Einstein*

I don't think that protesting is useless, however. It can have an impact in the long term. But I think it's important to be aware that the effort and time required by millions of people, compared to the few proven effects on political decisions, also shows that demonstrations alone, if not accompanied by personal action on the part of those who organise and participate in them, are nothing more than hot air, waving our arms in the air to reassure ourselves that we have done something.
The effect of demonstrations lies much more in bringing people together, making visible the will to act, which allows everyone who participates or others who show solidarity to boost their own initiatives in the same direction and to support decision-makers who have chosen to act in the same direction or who are almost ready to do so. And it is at this level that the transmission – or not – of information about the announcement of these demonstrations allows – or not – a wider section of the population to be reached; something that news media editors do not seem to be very aware of in general.

The middle class is the segment of the population with the greatest potential to embody the transition. But the majority are still unaware of this. Personal or general crises, information provided by the media, and

the influence of the social environment will continue to help accelerate awareness. The change has become visible in more ways than one in the daily habits of this population. It generally concerns the ecological footprint much more than the financial management of money, but the evolution of one inevitably rubs off on the other.

2. What kind of individual change are we talking about : first of all, in tangible reality

a - The responsibility to act even if you are the only one doing so

One of the major aspects of the shift in our conceptions is understanding that our individual responsibility in all our personal actions is much greater than we imagine. It does not matter whether we act alone or as part of a group. What matters is that we take responsibility for our actions. Because as long as we depend on the inertia of decision-makers, only citizen action can enable us to achieve our goals.

In our society, nourished by the culture of profit, while it is necessary to speak out against the injustice of enrichment in all areas of our lives, it is above all essential that we ourselves stop participating in this system as much as possible by curbing our overconsumption, rejecting advertising and refusing to participate in anything that relies on advertising (most media, social networks and other GAFAM), refusing "profitable" bank investments, readjusting all our citizen behaviour, and participating in new local initiatives that go in the opposite direction. It is also our duty to try to make ourselves heard, when within our reach, by the media that persist in conveying harmful beliefs in all these areas, and at all levels of political power.

Alone, we can do nothing. And when we start acting alone, there is no guarantee that someone else is acting elsewhere in the same way. And that is probably the most difficult part of our responsibility to bear. Because whether we are alone in taking action or part of a majority, it does not change the importance of our personal responsibility once we become aware of the need to act. And even if we were the only ones able to move in this direction, it would not diminish that responsibility – quite the contrary.

For as long as we believe that the goal is to obtain initiative, commitment and action from public authorities, economic powers or, more broadly, from others, from chance, from fate, etc., we ourselves, through this attitude, constitute an obstacle to change.

Of course, as individuals, it is easy to choose the perspective that we are just a drop in the ocean. But since the ocean (in terms of liquid) is made up of nothing but drops of water, not playing our role as a drop of water is already a source of problems.

Because as long as we consider ourselves to be nothing more than drops of water in the ocean, we will never be able to change course in front of all the disasters we have generated. And this point of view could be symbolically compared to denying, for example, the existence of tsunamis, as denial does not change the consequences of their passage.
Collectively, we have been able to perpetuate poverty and exploitation for a significant portion of humanity, destroy our environment and warm the planet, all because individually we have allowed it to happen, because we have participated quietly, complacently, or even completely willingly.

However, if we are capable of the worst, both in action and in submission or inertia, we are also capable of the best. And when we adopt goodness in our behaviour, intentions and thoughts, we can then create tsunamis of resilience, creativity, reconstruction, alternatives, solidarity, sharing, redemption and generosity.
In a tsunami, every drop plays its part. And by reversing the trend, we will be much stronger than anything we have been capable of destroying. Not to mention that once we play our part as a drop of water, we create a current (with the few other drops of water acting in the same way), and we draw tens of

thousands of drops of water to follow us, even if this is not visible, even if we have not communicated anything around us (see part six, on influences) that we may have.
But it is a choice we must make, and no one can make it for us. And only this choice can save us.

> *"Those who have the privilege to know have the duty to act." Einstein*

b - What if the notion of a drop in the ocean turned out to be completely false?

You are probably not going to like what follows. Both because I am returning to the figures I used in some chapters of the first part, and because the reasoning and conclusions I draw from them will shock you. And yet I am confident that they are correct. For although the explanation I am about to present is not strictly scientific, given that I am basing it on figures whose accuracy I cannot prove (I already referred to this in my article: *"Ecological footprint and passive violence"* [200] - [see Ref C]), the reasoning itself is very simple to understand and leaves no room for doubt.
I know that these figures are close to reality and that they provide an order of magnitude that I will use to develop my reasoning. It is the reasoning that is important in what I am trying to convey. So here it is:

If we consider that, in 25 years, 450 million people died from poverty, hunger and malnutrition worldwide between 1991 and 2016 – according to the article (already cited) that refers to this [201] – and that they are no longer included in the statistics, it is high time to take them into account again. I have never read any article in the media that took into account people who died in the past. By not taking them into account, we are absolving ourselves of even more responsibility than we already do.

Let me explain.

First of all, we need to be realistic and acknowledge that it is impossible to know the actual global mortality figures linked to malnutrition. The article in French *"Des chiffres et des faits sur la malnutrition dans le monde" (Facts and figures on malnutrition in the world)* by Materne Maetz (2018), under the heading *"Chiffre de mortalité causée par la malnutrition" (Mortality figures caused by malnutrition),* explains the reasons why it is difficult to compile this type of statistics. [202]
But added to this is the fact that there is a kind of collective amnesia regarding the history of hunger-related deaths around the world.
In the article, in French, *"1990-2015, comment la faim dans le monde a reculé" (1990-2015, how world hunger has decline*, by Eddy Fougier (2015), we are told the following:

> *"In total, the number of undernourished people in the world fell by 21% between 1990-1992 and 2014-2016. This trend is moving in the right direction, but we are still a long way from the target set in 1996 by the WFS. Nevertheless, the report on The State of Food Insecurity in the World estimates that, given the increase in population during the period 1990-2015, "nearly two billion people have been lifted out of probable undernourishment over the past 25 years."* [203]

The article mentions population growth, but not the huge number of people who have died of malnutrition and disappeared from these statistics. So, if "the number of undernourished people in the world has been reduced", it is also partly because some of them have died. And this omission or amnesia seems to be widespread. In any case, I have found no trace of this on the internet (and it's not for lack of trying), except for the article mentioning Thomas Pogge's calculations [204], which I have no proof of the reliability of. However, this bias in reasoning implies that we believe we are acting effectively or relatively effectively (since we are not succeeding at all in eradicating malnutrition), when in fact the effectiveness of the efforts undertaken is even more insufficient than it appears.

And I will hammer home this point, because the subject is so important that I cannot avoid the figures and reasoning that follow.

So, bearing in mind that the figures are not entirely representative of reality, but that they give an order of magnitude: 450 million represents approximately one fifteenth of the world's population. It is difficult to define the precise fraction since the world population has grown during this 25-year period. The population grew from around 5.5 billion in 1991 to nearly 7.5 billion in 2016.

To try to visualise this order of magnitude, let us focus on the population of children aged 1 at the beginning of this 25-year period, i.e. those born in 1990. This population was then 26 years old in 2016. Without taking into account the fact that mortality is significantly higher in early childhood in populations affected by malnutrition, and therefore using figures that are significantly lower than reality, just to try to visualise the situation, it is the reasoning rather than the calculation that counts here; 1/15 of this population of children would therefore have died during these 25 years.

At the same time, in 2016, the number of people living in extreme poverty was estimated at over 700 million. This corresponded to nearly one tenth of the world's population. (This figure is estimated at over 820 million in 2022.)
So, still without mentioning exact figures, in 2016, around one tenth of 26-year-olds (who were therefore 1 year old in 1990) were living in extreme poverty.

Of all those born in 1990, and still without mentioning exact figures, we can therefore consider that, in 2016, 1/15 had already died and 1/10 were living in extreme poverty. Yet, 1/15 + 1/10 = 1/6.

Therefore, still for the population born in 1990, we can consider that in 2016, 26 years later: 1/6, or more than 16%, had either died from poverty or were living in extreme poverty.

Now that the reasoning has been established, let us bring it back to our personal sphere. Imagine that among your circle of family, colleagues, friends, acquaintances and neighbours, one in six people or one in six households had been wiped off the map or were living in poverty. If these people lived close to us, we would consider it unacceptable and unbearable. We could not stand idly by and watch this happen.

The fact that all this is happening far away from us allows us to look the other way, to ignore it, and to content ourselves with making an annual donation to an NGO that is trying to alleviate some of the world's poverty.

Yet it is because of us that all this persists. It is because each of us continues to have an explosive ecological footprint, continues to overconsume, waste, pollute and seek to become richer that poverty persists.

Of course, according to our beliefs and what the news tells us, it is the whole system that is at stake, and each individual has only a tiny responsibility within that system. Except that, mathematically speaking, this lifestyle maintained by five people results in the misery or death of a sixth. So our responsibility is not as insignificant as all that. We may not necessarily have significant decision-making power to change this at the regulatory level. But we do have significant power to dissociate ourselves from the rules of this system, without necessarily opposing it. We are not obliged to have an explosive ecological footprint. We all have the capacity to become more frugal.

Let's look at it from another perspective.
Many media outlets cite the figure of 25,000 deaths per day linked to hunger and malnutrition worldwide.
25,000! Try to imagine that number in your reality: half a football stadium, a demonstration more than a kilometre long.

Every day, this happens. These people disappear.
If this happened during a war, in a concentration camp, we would call it genocide, extermination. When an earthquake kills tens of thousands of people in a matter of moments, an unprecedented movement of solidarity, both from leaders and the population, emerges in dozens of countries around the world.
Yet 25,000 people die every day from malnutrition, amid widespread indifference. 'It's far away'. It is not a brutal and localised phenomenon. 'They are not people like us' (different country, different culture, different language, different religion, different skin colour, etc.).

> *"It's as if a significant part of humanity were now in the way. Since we can't eliminate them, we look the other way." Martín Caparrós* [205]
> Martín Caparrós, (interviewed by Isabelle Rüf of Le Temps newspaper about his book "La faim" published in 2015) -

This quote could not be more true.

Because these deaths are preventable, and they are linked to our Western lifestyle. We know these figures. They appear regularly in one form or another in the media. How is it that we do not feel more concerned? Of course, the responsibility is collective. But that does not detract from personal responsibility. Only our complacency, our complicity, our carelessness, our indifference, our denials, our amnesias, our selfishness, our racism, our addictions, habits and conditioning guide us, not to inaction, but to actively participate in maintaining this hell on Earth.
There is a degree of ignorance and unconsciousness, of course. But we are quick to hide behind such justifications because we do not want to see, as much the perpetual catastrophe that this constitutes, as the role we play in this drama, even if we did not decide to enter into such a scenario. And yet world hunger is only part of the problem.

And it is time get out of denial, to get out of indifference, and to take responsibility head on.

I'm not saying it's easy. I'm not saying I'm a role model. But I'm doing my best. If we're not alone in doing so, it makes it much more accessible, and the system is the process of transformation. And so we can each be a catalyst that stimulates and accelerates this transformation, carrying out painstaking work to get back to basics and thus potentially, in the longer term, enable one sixth of the population to regain their dignity and right to life. All while contributing to the reduction of all the other aspects of the problem, which are impossible to list, but the most important and visible of which are currently global warming and environmental destruction.

c - Stopping giving them power

And in this regard, at the citizen level, despite all the obstacles that the majority of representatives of the ruling and privileged classes will put in place to prevent any evolution that does not serve their interests, we must learn to stop letting them hijack our own power. Let's stop giving them our assets by participating in the economy they have concocted to plunder the majority of the population.

In fact, if we take a step back and look at the bigger picture, we realise that the ruling class has no power unless we delegate ours to them. This does not mean going out to protest, going on strike, refusing to vote, signing petitions, or engaging in aggressive or destructive behaviour. It means hitting them where it hurts: in their wallets, so by stopping. giving them all our money. Nor does it mean creating large boycott movements. Things can happen at a very local level, without necessarily consulting your neighbour, simply by each of us taking responsibility for no longer participating in the disaster on our own scale, without comparing, without judging, without seeking to see the effects of our actions, but by seeking to bring fairness back into our behaviour as citizens, in the way we manage our money, in the way we choose whether or not to consume. It is a daily learning process that takes time if we are not forced to do so.

And so we are all concerned. That is how far we have to go.

The crucial point, then, is for each of us to understand the need, above all else, to question ourselves on a personal level, our behaviour, our citizens responsibilities and also, as we shall see later, our mental constructs and psychological modes of functioning.

What is important is not so much the ideas, or the implementation of a new system, or the establishment of new rules that could define it, but rather the individual's ability to understand that this is necessary, that it is possible, and that it must be created as quickly as possible. Once a sufficient number of individuals have reached this understanding, everything else will follow very easily, contrary to our expectations when we have not yet understood it.
And even if we remain a small minority who understand this and take action, it is still essential to persevere in this direction, because it is the only chance we still have to overturn the current balance and limit the damage.

It is this understanding that gives meaning to the approach. Because from this perspective, we should not wait for the political parties that defend the causes we support to come to power or take the appropriate initiatives. Quite the contrary. It is when each of us acts in line with the objectives to be achieved, in all areas of our lives, that the public authorities and economic and financial powers eventually follow the masses and go with the flow. So we do indeed have the power in our hands. Alone, we can do nothing, but we have a responsibility to choose not to be among the last to adopt consistency between our collective goals and our personal behaviour, and to take action to be among the first.
When the majority moves in one direction, politicians follow suit by legislating and forcing the last holdouts to follow the new path.

Every additional person who understands becomes intrinsically a factor for change, even if they have not yet invested anything in this direction in terms of their behaviour.

When we understand that our own behaviour is part of what we denounce outside ourselves, and that changing it has far greater consequences than our preconceptions allow us to conceive, then we can no longer hesitate to engage in this process. And contagion, as we shall see, goes far beyond the strength of our arguments or the example we set.

But beyond understanding the need to change our behaviours, there is indeed a psychological journey to be undertaken: a fundamental questioning of our mental and emotional functioning, a real elevation of our level of consciousness.

And this is a path that no one can force us to choose, nor can anyone take for us. In most cases, it is our life circumstances that will lead us there. Many of us are already on the road.

And even if it were already too late, we would have nothing to lose and probably much to gain by changing course.

d - Freedom – autonomy – solidarity

In the previous chapters, I mentioned the idea that progress in society is more likely to happen when it comes from the citizens themselves and the public authorities are then prepared to follow. I also mentioned the idea that when solidarity is organised institutionally, it leads to implement assistance for some while creating indifference from the others, and if left-wing parties talk about solidarity, this latter, in such circumstances it is no longer encouraged between individuals. As long as solidarity is organised on a

large scale, in the form of assistance (rights and benefits of all kinds), it is dehumanised. And it is disadvantaged in its individual expression. True solidarity is not something that can be imposed on individuals; it is something that must come from the will of each individual. It can be encouraged by influencing citizens, but as long as they do not make the decision to participate themselves, there is nothing to be obtained from them.
There is a link between our capacity for solidarity and the freedom of choice we have. Our altruistic impulses cannot therefore manifest themselves under pressure or obligation. It is therefore necessary to have a sufficient level of autonomy to be able to demonstrate solidarity. And autonomy can be encouraged within social groups, in the family, at school and at work. In this sense, universal allowance could increase solidarity within the population exponentially.

3. Beyond the modifications in the behaviours of citizens or consumers: raising the level of consciousness

As we have seen, our entire consumer society is based on outdated modes of functioning, and the actions taken to move away from them are generally based on the same types of reasoning that led to the dysfunctions in the first place. We are therefore entitled to believe that these responses will ultimately be just as problematic, with a few exceptions.

And as long as we try to break out of the impasse created by the mentality of consumption, profit and the market economy, with the rules that currently prevail, dictated mainly by the balance of power (authority, growth, competitiveness, power, etc.), we cannot escape the framework.

As long as we persist in worshipping the pursuit of profit and enrichment; as long as we idolise consumption, fashion, appearances and the pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake; as long as we defend our own advantages to the detriment of the advantages of others; as long as we communicate through arguments and provocations rather than through listening and empathy; as long as we continue to judge and condemn those who do not think like us, do not live like us, do not believe like us; ...
As long as we remain in all these modes, our consciousness will remain dormant, and we will only be able to find solutions that temporarily or partially mask the problems, but which in fact perpetuate them.

Conversely, when we abandon all the negative aspects of our society: by distancing ourselves from the hypertrophied economic sphere and from enrichment; we begin to transform ourselves and return to natural behaviours. For the omnipresence of money in our lives keeps us in power struggles and exacerbates all the negative aspects of human nature, such as comparison and judgement, but also greed, dishonesty, fear of scarcity, and the behaviours that this induces, such as manipulation, harassment, competition, materialism, repression and exploitation.

These attitudes and behaviours can disappear when they are no longer denied or encouraged, and when they are even socially discouraged. This allows other types of attitudes to develop with a fairly rapid contagion effect. We can then further develop our capacities for collaboration, creativity, and *'collective intelligence'* (see the chapter on this subject).

Choosing this path will have a snowball effect, leading to a real mutation in our behaviours and mentalities, which could prove to be less difficult and more spontaneous than we imagine.

a - Consciousness and information

Contrary to certain beliefs, the level of consciousness is not directly linked, on the one hand, to being informed about a situation and realising that there is a problem; and on the other hand, to having the

rational ability to find solutions to this problem in order to be able to solve it. Psychological aspects also come into play.

A deeply rooted belief on this subject concerns the knowledge of our history, so that we do not repeat it. However, it is clear that this is not enough. If knowing history were enough to prevent it from repeating itself, wars, famines and poverty would have disappeared from the scene long ago.

To transform reality, we do not need more information. We already have a massive amount of information at our disposal, and it is in our best interest to learn how to sort it and refuse to feed on it. The time and energy we spend on gathering more and more information, trying to pass it on, trying to convince those around us about it, trying to know all the details so we can argue our case better, etc., is time and energy that we are not using elsewhere. Neither to evolve, nor to modify our environment, nor to put our creativity to work, nor to come together to do all of this, nor to help each other and give the best of ourselves.

Understanding and intellectual knowledge are part of evolution. But a different form of understanding must arise at a level beyond that of our intellectual. It is a matter of conscious learning. This requires us to look inward. As long as we do not recognise, in the problems we denounce, either our personal responsibility for them or the part of ourselves that echoes and reacts negatively to them, we are doomed to continue participating in them, unable to resolve them.

b - Consciousness and technology

As for the search for discoveries and the development of technologies in a race against time, in a way we are not quite ready for it.

Technology could indeed help us. However, without the right level of consciousness, we are steering it in such a way that it is plunging us even deeper into crisis:
- through the rebound effect and the waste or pollution that it too often entails;
- through the endless pursuit of the ease, which dulls our minds rather than helping us grow;
- or through addiction and the colonisation of our minds by GAFAM and other social networks, YouTubers, etc.;
- or even through purely perverse research that defies morality but which no law had imagined and which therefore cannot be prohibited once it has been initiated.

Domotics, for example, and certain aspects of excessive digitalisation take over some of our mental functions, which eventually become lost. The internet connects us to others, but at the cost of bombarding us with targeted advertising 'thanks' to artificial intelligence, algorithms, etc. It also hijacks our time and attention, distancing us from those around us and reducing our circle of real-life relationships, while insidiously limiting the time we have for all our other activities.

However, the experience of COVID-19 has taught us to make better use of virtual communication to compensate for the lack of physical connection imposed by lockdown. Video conferencing courses and video communication can open up new horizons and save us from unnecessary travel.

Certain discoveries and innovations in the fields of science, information technology and artificial intelligence may help us to solve some of the problems facing society as a whole, but they will not be enough. In the long term, they may help us eradicate diseases, find more efficient ways to produce clean energy, etc., and at best reduce the level of CO2 in the atmosphere.
However, the problem with scientific discoveries is that there will always be someone who will exploit them in a destructive way. Or our lack of consciousness will make us enthusiastic about the prospects offered by new discoveries, new understandings and new applications of our scientific knowledge. And decades,

even generations later, we will discover damage that we never imagined. This is what we are currently seeing as a result of excessive industrialisation, the rampant production of plastic, and the unlimited use of oil and its derivatives, among other things. And we are probably only at the beginning of these dire statements.

And that's without taking into account the rebound effect already mentioned, which, when a new technology is used to save resources, will lead to excessive consumption of this new technology and, conversely, cause the waste of these resources to skyrocket.

We might also ask ourselves how research into travelling to other planets, searching for signs of life in other galaxies or discovering the ultimate limits of our universe, which involves the work of thousands of researchers and millions of euros of investment, how all this can be of use to us in the medium term, when in the short term we are simply on the verge of destroying ourselves through the way we manage our own planet.

I am not criticising the very existence of scientific research and new technologies, I am talking about our manifest inability to collectively direct research in the right direction and use it on a large scale in a responsible and constructive manner. And this inevitably raises the question of whether it is really a good idea to continue rushing headlong into the development of new technologies, at any cost, in order to supposedly improve our comfort, our happiness, communication, our knowledge, etc. And above all to bring pseudo-happiness to those who will profit financially from it.
Because continuing in this direction means persisting in choosing to do as we have always done for the last two or three centuries, namely: rushing headlong forward, without any consciousness of the consequences for tomorrow of what we are creating today. There is, of course, a world of difference between discovering a vaccine for AIDS, Ebola or Covid-19, and having a little robot at home that you can order to close the shutters from your armchair.

However, as long as initiatives come from people who function as we have always functioned, we will only make very small steps forward, and we risk not moving fast enough to save the skin of future generations.

c - Consciousness and new solutions

Raising our level of consciousness means first and foremost moving beyond denial in all areas where we continue to contribute to the problem, so that we can reorient our choices and finally play our part in finding solutions.

The real solutions lie above all in our conceptions of reality. And there needs to be a shift in the way we conceive of reality.

Whatever information and levels of understanding of reality we have, we will need to change the colour of our glasses.
And to achieve this, we need to take a step back and get out of the box. Only a conscious work can make this possible.

Indeed, as long as we remain attached to the problematic situations we encounter, the responses we attempt to provide will remain a reflection of what we are trying to resolve.

It is therefore necessary to become aware that, very often, what we consider to be benefits or solutions are in fact still sources of the same difficulties.

And there is an additional important aspect to consider. The more we focus on the problematic aspects of our society, the more we remain attached to the values that all this conveys. It is not so much because we advocate them, or because we take them as a model, but because they remain our references, since all our attention is devoted to them.
In a way, whatever the case may be: by positioning ourselves as the source of these values, as victims of these values, or even as opponents of these values, they remain the values on which we base our concerns. Our brains remain flooded with thoughts related to these values, whether we approve of them or not. And this conditions the rest of our thoughts to follow suit, making us unable to look in any other direction.

This is particularly true in the context of feminism, where women's struggle consists mainly of obtaining rights, enforcing them and seeking to change men's behaviour, without ever thinking that they themselves are affected by the evil they are fighting. And that by healing, they will intrinsically help men to respect them. Just because women suffer unbearable behaviour from men does not mean that they are not part of the problem. This is not to deny what they suffer, and even less so their sometimes unimaginable suffering, or to point the finger at them. It is about realising that their submission to the mentality that dictates men's behaviour – and which they have internalised just as much as men – this submission, this acceptance, leads their behaviour to reinforce that of men in the way they treat them. The current mentality that prevails in relations between men and women is a two-sided coin. There is a feminine side and a masculine side, but both sides are part of the same coin, and it is the whole coin that is concerned.

Returning to the more general theme of the problematic framework, if the solutions lie outside the problems, and we keep our focus on the type of thoughts that are linked to the problems, we can only remain blind to discovering them.

Alternatives become accessible when attention is focused on values that are the opposite of combat, orders, struggle, coercion, revenge, authority, retaliation and rebellion. These values are found along with understanding, generosity, empathy, respect, solidarity, integrity, authenticity, honesty, etc.

I am well aware that in the most extreme situations, this way of thinking has no place. I am not saying that in the face of murder, rape, harassment or any other extreme situation on any scale, we should respond with gentleness and indulgence.
What I am trying to say is that the circumstances that lead to such extremes are ingrained in everyone's mindset. And that changing our mindset means working to make evolve circumstances and prevent such hellish situations in the long term. And so, everyone who takes responsibility for working on this makes moving things forward and indirectly helping to reduce the risk of such situations.

Being aware of the problem is one thing (and necessary). Staying focused on it or on the mindset associated with it is another, which only serves to exacerbate the difficulty or to fail again and again to find a way out of the situation.
And it is a mirage we all share, that of wanting to dig deeper and deeper into the problem in order to find a way out. However, when we try to dig deeper into a difficulty in order to get out of it, we risk drowning in it or becoming stuck in it, and making it bigger. When faced with an obstacle, once it has been recognised, it is important to look for what lies behind it rather than persisting in analysing it.

I am really talking about the way of thinking. When our brain is occupied or preoccupied with all the negative values mentioned earlier in the text: whether we adhere to them or not, our thoughts remain immersed in this framework, and reality aligns with it, because our glasses are those of negative values. What's more, when we are immersed in negative thoughts and concerns, we become incapable of imagining that we could have any other thoughts or concerns.

If, on top of that, we simply resist the people who are the source of the problem or who refuse to solve it, we condemn ourselves to remaining powerless.

What's more, when we remain focused on the breeding ground for the difficult situation, and our means of seeking a way out are resistance and opposition, we remain intrinsically linked to the mentality that is at the root of this situation, and therefore completely unable to imagine other paths based on different ways of thinking. And what we try to put in place will simply be a reflection of what we are trying to leave behind, and therefore just as problematic.

d - Untying the knots in our heads

Very often, when we try to get out of a difficult situation, we tend to rush things. We rush headlong, often abruptly, hoping that the knots will untie themselves by pulling on all the strings at once.

And since everyone continues to pull on the strings, we are not close to untying anything. To compensate for this, we simply put plasters everywhere.

And when someone dares to act differently, since they are alone against a pack pulling on all the strings, their action rarely succeeds.

And in my opinion, the knots are mainly in our heads: until we learn how to untie knots, we will not be able to untie the right strings properly.

Here is an African proverb that symbolises this aspect quite well:

> *"When you have a hammer in your head, you see all problems as nails."*

It is therefore time to learn to use something other than a hammer, both individually and collectively. Because what we cannot do on a small scale, we will never be able to do on a large scale.

And at the collective level, we are still at the stage of wanting to eradicate poverty through growth, we are trying to stop wars with weapons, we want to combat global warming with technology, we are building walls to stop the flow of migrants, we want to eliminate injustices against women by demanding that men behave with dignity. And we are deluding ourselves.

And when we discover alternatives, we must then learn to become able to put them into practice. And we can never take them for granted. Because, in the current situation, the political world, the economic and financial world, and the majority of citizens are either still heavily holding back when it comes to untying the knots, or turning a deaf ear and continuing to pull the strings anarchically. It is therefore necessary, thanks to our intuition, our experience and even our wisdom, to have the lucidity and ability to question our approach, to choose whether it is appropriate to persevere in trying to promote our ideas until they are accepted and practicable, or whether it is preferable to propose something else entirely.

Changing the framework of our way of thinking is therefore indispensable. This is a gradual learning process. Initially, we become increasingly aware of how inadequate the solutions we encounter in our lives are. But noticing this does not mean that we are yet able to find the right answers, although it is already half way there. The rest is done by trial and error.

Generally speaking, when faced with a problem, before trying to solve it, we first need to understand what our thoughts are steeped in. It would be illusory to think that we can overcome obstacles and leave negativity and violence behind if we do not first modify the framework.

And to break out of the framework, it is imperative to learn to think in a completely different way. This requires working on our own internal modes of functioning, i.e. at the individual level. To caricature, we could imagine this learning process as a major clean-up of our brains: an inner revolution rather than an inner evolution, carried out voluntarily by ourselves. And even if a growing minority of the population currently feels the need to move in this direction, those who are at the stage of really questioning themselves on this level remain, nevertheless, very much in the minority.

e - Changing the colour of our glasses: changing our way of thinking

Currently, from birth, learning to think is largely random for each individual, self-taught in a way. Of course, there is imitation and identification with those close to us, a significant influence from our environment, and the experiences we have. But there is no actual education in thinking during childhood, except for the integration of language, which will frame a large part of our thoughts. Later on, reasoning skills can be taught through mathematics, philosophy, logic, argumentation and other subjects. However, reasoning is only the rational part of thinking, which, when all is said and done, represents only a small part of our mental functioning in most situations in life. (We will discuss this in more detail later).

The development of our thoughts actually depends much more on our habits, conditioning, automatic responses and beliefs. And all of this is stored in our brains in the form of neural connections. It is therefore embodied in our biology. Our thoughts are directly dependent on these neural connections, even if it has not been proven that they themselves are encoded in our biology. And so, by the time we reach adulthood, our brain's modes of functioning are already well integrated into our neural circuits. From then on, we can imagine that it is a titanic task to modify our way of thinking. This is because it requires us to start modifying all the neural connections responsible for all the automatic behaviours we have acquired since childhood, and which we have become so accustomed to that we are no longer aware of them. And that's not to mention that it is our thinking that must repair itself, which is no small feat. Even more difficult is the fact that questioning this entire structure can only be perceived as very dangerous. We have identified ourselves with this entire construct, and modifying it will be perceived as losing ourselves.

The more linear our path is, the more we will be convinced, deep down, that we are using common sense, being logical, even objective, that we hold the truth, etc. If nothing disrupts our mental system, we consider ourselves capable of managing our thoughts and reasoning correctly, etc. We even consider those who cannot do so to be either "mentally deficient" or suffering from "mental illness". However, this is not true. Mental illness and mental deficiency are labels given to people whose mental functioning visibly deviates from the norm. But functioning within the norm in terms of our public or façade behaviours does not mean that we are functioning correctly in our thoughts (especially when society as a whole is sick). Moreover, our thoughts are not usually written on our face. Therefore, "conforming" behaviour does not necessarily mean that the thoughts behind it are healthy.

Krishnamurti goes even further:

> *"It is not a sign of good health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society."*

And until we begin to question our system of thought, we remain stuck in our archaic ways of functioning, completely unconscious that our conditioning, beliefs, habits and automatic responses are substituting for our will and undermining our intentions and actions.
And so we feed, for example, the habit of judging that when something does not work, it is the other person (or chance, or the system) who is responsible, while remaining blind to the fact that we are often part of the situation we denounce.

And in this context, still largely unconsciously, we allow ourselves to be led by fads, trends, religions, major media events, reality TV, social media, as well as our addictions, advertising, consumerism, etc. Our thinking is then "framed" by our social context. And finally, in addition to our conditioning and habits of thought, there are quite a few behaviours or attitudes that are instilled in us from outside. And since we are immersed in all of this, we accept it and participate in it without question. Just like a fish in water, which cannot be conscious that it is swimming in water until it is taken out and experiences the threat of suffocation.

By going with the flow and participating in this system, each of us ends up thinking in much the same way as our family and friends, give or take a few minor differences. This makes it very difficult to learn to think differently. The difficulty of standing out is not only due to the fact that we are unconscious of all these processes and therefore they operate automatically for us, but also that when we try to shift, even slightly, we become less socially integrated and sometimes even marginalised. The general tendency will therefore be to conform.

Conversely, the more we shift away from all these modes of functioning, the more they end up appearing shocking or off-putting.

On the one hand, we then realise that we are, in a way, completely ‘dazed’ or 'dumbed' by what surrounds us and what seemed normal to us until then; and in the process, that we live in a world that is in complete disarray.
On the other hand, as we gradually emerge from this form of hypnosis, where we accepted the unacceptable out of habit, we discover that we were only able to see the tip of the iceberg of everything that is wrong, when in fact it is our civilisation as a whole that is heading for ruin if we continue on the same course. When we become able to make the connection between a society in disarray and our thoughts that have adapted to all its dysfunctions, a slow process will take place that will gradually change the colours of the glasses through which we view the world and perceive ourselves. And this questioning will only be superficial until we are able to maintain the link between what is happening outside of us and the way we perceive and interact with it.

f - Shaking up the structure of our beliefs

Creating alternatives with new ways of thinking involves not only discovering the colour of the glasses through which we perceive reality, but also becoming able to choose whether or not to put colours on our glasses and to choose which ones and in what circumstances.

It is actually like peeling an onion. Our entire personality and all our knowledge are based on beliefs that have been built up (since childhood). And knocking down a few of them can feel like undermining the entire edifice. It is therefore only natural to try at all costs to avoid questioning ourselves, because the fear of losing ourselves, or rather losing our footing, is enormous. When in reality, it's the other way around: the more we clean up, the clearer we see and the more comfortable we feel.

And ageing is certainly not an advantage when it comes to doing this work. Because the older we get, the more obscure the structure of our belief system becomes, and the more our glasses darken. This edifice has become reinforced on all sides. Often the foundations are cracking and need to be consolidated, but the layers and overlays of concrete and cement that reinforce the structure from the outside are so numerous and strong that we no longer have much access to the inside.

In fact, all the emotional wounds we accumulate with age and do not bother to heal (often this happens on an unconscious level, especially when it comes to trauma); all this accumulate, and the protections we build around these wounds also cause us to become stiffer. Ageing can then consist of becoming very

negative or very grumpy people; very rigid people with very narrow minds who no longer know how to think outside the box; or even people who are closed in on themselves, unable to break out of the walls they have built around themselves. And finally, when this cracks too much from within, it leads to senility and civilisation diseases. All of this is caricatural, of course, because very little of it is visible in behaviour in general.

Working on ourselves largely consists of scrutinising all the thoughts that cross our minds (and the emotions that often accompany them) every second of the day. That means tens of thousands of thoughts. And to question them. This work will transform the way we look at everything that happens outside of us. It will allow us to question our interpretation of events. And as a result, we will become capable of interacting differently with them.

True evolution can only take place in our minds (and/or in our bodies, when long-term wounds are imprinted within our very cells). The external results will only come afterwards.

And, I repeat, it is not a question of talking about this transformation at the societal level. It is a shift in each individual's conception which, when it occurs, modifies the experience of the person who realises it. And it is this revolution at the individual level that will intrinsically generate an evolution around the person who experiences it, without any intention of 'changing others', but because it is part of the process of evolution that contributes to a collective transformation.

When we shift our reference points at the individual level, our relationships with others are forced to change, and this inevitably impacts those around us.

"We will never obtain peace in the outer world until we make peace with ourselves." Dalai Lama

To imagine that the entire population could make this giant leap seems completely illusory. However, on an individual level, although this task seems daunting at first, it happens quite naturally. Then, when progress is made by one person, there is a snowball effect. And the more people involved in such a journey (even if they do not know each other), the more this contagious effect accelerates and intensifies.

The process that transforms us from within is not necessarily visible, or even conscious at times, because it is gradual and cannot be measured. It is a shift in the way we function, but in the long term it consists of a real transformation, which I would compare to that of a caterpillar becoming a chrysalis and then a butterfly. As we rediscover our essence, we end up no longer being quite the person we were before.
And the most visible part of the change is not so much in ourselves as in our relationships and concerns, which can be completely transformed.

It should be noted, however, that people's evolutions are always partial, and therefore the impact they have on those around them is also partial. Every step forward counts, regardless of the level at which one finds oneself.

g - Evolutionary leap in humanity

The current situation of our civilisation calls for an evolutionary leap for the whole of humanity, because without it, our very survival will be at stake.

This evolutionary leap, if we manage to achieve it, will be by far the greatest we have ever had to make, far greater than the mastery of fire, sedentarisation, the acquisition of language and then writing, industrialisation, and the advent of the information age.
Humans are evolving towards the ability:

- at the individual level, to take responsibility for managing their emotions and thoughts. And we can consider in particular: managing fear and the anger it often generates, which in turn leads to violence in all its forms. This ability will distance the human from instinctive, automatic or reflexive behaviour and enable the individual to act consciously and develop all their aptitudes oriented to people oriented toward the other;
- and, at the collective level, it will enable each one to learn to make conscious and intentional use of collective intelligence at all levels of society.

Until humans do so, they will only be able to use solutions from the past, which they will attempt to adapt using current technologies that will only further entangle the knots they are trying to untangle. And in this way, it leads to endlessly repeat the mistakes of the past despite the desire to remedy them.

Conversely, when we become the majority who succeed to activate the capacities for collaboration, solidarity, benevolence, generosity, acceptance of differences and healthy communication in all circumstances (and not only when everything is going well for us), we will then become able to discover completely different alternatives. And if many of us are capable of this, progress will be rapid.

And if we succeed, the content of our education will be changed in ways we cannot currently imagine.

And if we become able to offer this to future generations, they will look upon us with a little more indulgence, even gratitude, than if we remain confined to repeating the past through wars, our sacrosanct profits, our unwanted yet widespread injustices, etc.

It is not a foregone conclusion, but the only way to achieve it is to take this direction and believe in it, and therefore to focus on optimism, because otherwise we can be sure of failure given the scale of the objectives to be achieved.

4. Overcoming resistance to change:

However, adopting new ways of functioning (mainly mental) cannot be done by simple decision or at the snap of a finger. It means that many aspects of our personality will be challenged, many of our habits will be questioned, and our certainties will be shaken. Our mental, moral and psychological comfort will crumble. We risk confrontation with those around us who will not understand and will not want to see us adopt new references and attitudes, set new limits, express new opinions, and who will most likely not support us. It is therefore anything but comfortable. Many factors will therefore come into play to slow us down in this learning process, stop it, or even bring us back to our old ways of functioning.

a - Under hypnosis: our doubts, our passivity, our conformism, our cowardice

In fact, it is essential to become aware that we are part of a system that is imposed on us and presented to us as being fair. And its imperfections are legitimised by the fact that it is considered to be the only one possible, and that it is so complex and ancient that it is impossible to replace it with anything else. And even if, deep down, we know that this is not true, when faced with the fact that everyone else adheres to it, it remains very, very difficult to take the opposite view. Our doubts, our passivity, our desire to remain well integrated, our cowardice, and the secondary benefits we derive from it can lead us very far in continuing to follow the general trend.

Joe Dispenza, in his book *"Becoming Supernatural"* (2019), explains several times that by the age of 35, only about 5% of our thoughts are conscious [206].

Under these conditions, I dare not imagine what it is like at 60. The rest is just habits, automatisms, conditioning, oversights, repression, etc. This does not leave us much leeway to make informed choices.

Note: This figure of 5% conscious thoughts at the age of 35 is repeated by several authors. However, none of them cite a reference based on a study, experiment or statistical value based on neuroscience. It should therefore be considered a nuanced concept. Nevertheless, anyone can easily learn to observe the accuracy of this concept for themselves. The vast majority of our thoughts arise automatically without us even paying attention to them, and it is rare that we make a conscious choice to break out of our usual patterns of thinking and consciously choose to go in a different direction that is not dictated by external factors.

Therefore, as long as we do not wake up and decide to take back matters into our own hands, we continue to accept playing a fool's game and remain asleep, unable to face our responsibilities, while believing that we are functioning lucidly and managing our reasoning and behaviour, when in fact they are merely the automatic repetition of everything we have learned in our lives and which, for the most part, we have never questioned.
And as long as we remain caught up in this game, we will continue to follow the rules meticulously and seek to be among the winners. Yet, in a way, this game consists of exploiting the worst in ourselves. And if we remain under the hypnosis of our conditioning, it keeps us in the race to win the jackpot, or in the quest to resemble an idol who is even worse than we are, or to take the easy and pleasurable route, or simply to follow the norms so as not to provoke the ostracism or acrimony of others. This game plays out in many aspects of our daily lives: fashion, the pursuit of status, overconsumption, waste, addictions, the excesses of social media, emotional dumbing down via reality TV and most mainstream film productions, violence, and the lobotomy effect of our dependence on information technology, or even the demand for unlimited freedom to do and say whatever we please, without any concern for the impact of our words on those who receive them. These are the most striking examples. The corollary of this is individualism, withdrawal into oneself, and their consequences: racism and intolerance in all their forms, nationalism, populism, etc.

Accepting and adopting the rules of the game will lead us to try to protect our privileges, while seeking to remain integrated into the fabric of society, fighting to maintain a certain social position or to obtain a better one. We will allow ourselves to be defined by the level of our qualifications, the size of our car, the distance we travel on holiday, the constant renewal of our wardrobe, and even the brand names displayed prominently on our clothes; all of which are signs of our status, our power, the size of our wallet, but which ultimately, without us wanting them to be, are above all a display of our conditioning and our degree of submission to this fool's game. As long as we are not aware of these aspects, we can only remain dependent on this suicidal consumer society. For even though we are no longer, in practical terms, in survival mode, we nevertheless maintain social survival behaviours in order to remain integrated among our peers.

And so, the higher we climb the social ladder, the more rules and conventions there are to follow, which inevitably also involve expenditure.
Competition, judgement, social pressure, and much of the media content (including advertising) will urge us to stay in the game and invest more and more of our energy in it, sometimes to the point of getting into a bidding competition and trying to maintain a level where we will not feel judged. Over time, we may end up trapped by loans, a job that overworks us or we don't enjoy, superficial relationships, addictions to alcohol, gambling, and other drugs, without ever having the impulse to break free from this spiral.

And rebellious behaviour in the face of society's implicit injunctions is merely a mirror image of the behaviour it denounces. By opposing rules we do not agree with, we remain within the same framework and have very little leeway to change the context we are fighting against.

All aspects of our lives are governed by these rules of the game. No one is spared. But we all have the right to seek out other types of games, and above all to stop attending and supporting those who hold the reins in this area, or trying to join them.

Opening even one eye to this is irreversible. It then becomes almost impossible to return to the old rules without feeling rather uncomfortable. And leaving the game becomes salutary.

But opening your first eye is not so simple, because in addition to conditioning, hypnosis, and conformism, we are caught up in something akin to Stockholm syndrome.

b - Stockholm syndrome

Finding ourselves in a situation where our survival – or our privileges to a certain extent – is threatened, makes us incredibly submissive, to the point of being able to approve of or at least show enormous complacency towards the abuses of power and injustices that we suffer, or that others suffer right next to us.
The phenomenon of hostages voluntarily submitting to their kidnappers, to the point of defending their cause and refusing to accuse them once they are released, has been called Stockholm Syndrome.
But this phenomenon can be found in all situations where survival (even indirect and long-term) is at stake.
And there are many such situations: slaves facing their masters, prostitutes facing their pimps, workers or employees facing certain bosses (who have the power to dismiss them and thus deprive them of their livelihood), the patient facing certain doctors, the battered woman facing her spouse, abused children facing their parents, and any other situation of violence and abuse and ill-treatments in institutions: retirement homes, boarding schools, hospitals, prisons, psychiatric institutions and other centres for disabled, handicapped or sick people, etc., as well as in cases of harassment at work, at school, on social media, etc.

In all these situations, victims agree to follow absurd rules without denouncing them, and sometimes even follow them willingly, publicly approve of them, or publicly conceal the most unjust ones, or even strongly oppose those who denounce them.

And, although I cannot prove it, I have the impression that, in relation to the current economy, this is in part a similar phenomenon, which cannot be literally included in the concept of Stockholm Syndrome, which implies aggression and trauma, but which is relatively close to it. In the sense that we find certain components of Stockholm Syndrome such as powerlessness, dependence, voluntary submission, blind adherence to the values of the dominant group, refusal to act against the dominant group, identification with the dominant group, the impossibility of escaping this context (given that the context is society as a whole), the fact that the dominant group is seen as benevolent, and hostility towards those who want to change this context.
Otherwise, beyond conditioning, complacency, cowardice, and conformism, how can we explain the incredible submission of the majority of the population to a system that is so inconsistent and unjust?

Complacency, and the fact that money corrupts, may explain why the wealthiest classes of the population are able to go along with the movement without reluctance. And for people from the middle and lower classes, there is also a great deal of manipulation, which leads them to willingly embrace what they would have fled from if they had been fully informed. But it is also likely that the submission of the majority and their voluntary participation are much more linked to a form of powerlessness, where they agree to collaborate with those who are the source of their misfortune, simply because it is the only way to keep our heads above water, because we have been educated to function in this way, and also because we are unaware that there are alternatives, and we feel so alone and powerless when faced with the choice of an alternative. In these circumstances, it is difficult to see clearly the boundaries between submission, unconsciousness, complacency and cowardice; or even between ignorance and conditioning, which lead us to cooperate so perfectly with what makes no sense.

c - The difficulty of going against the flow – Milgram's obedience to authority

Closely related to Stockholm syndrome, or at least something similar, is the phenomenon of submission to authority, which may explain our inertia and participation. Stanley Milgram introduced the concept. Although we believe ourselves to be endowed with conscience and a sense of responsibility as adults, experience shows that the vast majority of subjects who participated in his experiment – and this could be any one of us – are capable of inflicting unjustified torture on other people simply by submitting to authority. The experiment was the subject of a book by Stanley Milgram in 1974, *"Obedience to Authority; An Experimental View"*, presented in Wikipedia article [207] - [see Ref 28] and has since attracted a lot of attention. Society exerts a form of authority over us that varies in intensity, depending on whether it is social pressure from those around us or, on a larger scale, social norms. To remain socially acceptable, we have no choice but to conform. We are often willing to sacrifice our integrity in order to remain socially accepted. And since all this happens unspoken, under our radar, we don't realise it and therefore believe in the honesty of our behaviour, when in fact we are simply blindly obeying a form of social authority that abuses us and can lead us to participate in things that are not consistent with who we are, or even things we disapprove of.

At the same time, even if we want to try an alternative, as citizens, it is difficult to go against the prevailing opinion, either because all our sources of information (mass media, social networks, the internet) and those around us still too often perpetuate the same, almost universal discourse, in line with the profit economy; and even if we feel, see and perceive that this does not hold water, we often lack arguments, we doubt, we have nothing to base our discourse on. Or because expressing ourselves to people who do not understand, do not want to understand, or even do not want to hear, requires a psychological strength that is not always within our reach, depending on each person's circumstances.

And then also because, very often, we ourselves are part of the privileged population, in the sense that our survival is not directly threatened by a lack of money and that our willingness to go against the flow remains very superficial. And so, going with the flow and remaining in denial about reality, acting as if nothing is wrong, suits us just fine. We often find it easier to defend other causes than to question our own complacency in consumer society.

d - Putting into words what is implicit in order to avoid inconsistencies

Since a large part of all these processes operate unconsciously or semi-consciously, both at a collective and individual level; detecting what remains unsaid – either deliberately concealed or unconscious – requires a great deal of learning.

This learning process begins either because we are confronted with the obvious by chance circumstances that force us to see what was previously veiled, or because we are led to it by information that demonstrates it to us. However, it remains very difficult on our own to identify inconsistencies, manipulations and what is left unspoken, both in our daily lives and in our culture and in the news.

But the more we discover, the more accessible it becomes, even if it means guessing or suspecting. And that can also be dangerous. Because once we become accustomed to discovering what lies beneath appearances, we can easily become suspicious and distrustful, guessing lies and errors everywhere, even when there are none. It is therefore imperative to always remain sceptical and to give ourselves the means, as far as possible, to verify information or the conclusions we draw from the facts. And it is not at all easy to cultivate doubt about elements that go against commonly held beliefs, because social pressure will always be there, and sometimes relentless, to try to bring us back into line; which doubts will facilitate.

However, by no longer accepting the implicit too easily, we can put words to facts, learn to ask questions, seek verification, and expose inconsistencies in one way or another, or even avoid pitfalls.
This allows us to adapt our behaviours in an increasingly consistent manner by making fairer, more honest and more responsible choices.

Many areas of our society are currently being hit hard by the denunciation of unspoken truths and implicit behaviours (politics, business, finance, the media, social networks, as well as all places where social injustices occur, etc.). And, no matter the subject concerned, putting words to abuses, unspoken truths, taboos, denials and discrimination is part of a process that is slow at first, but once started, can only spread among the population and ultimately make evolve the mentalities with no turning back.

Because if all this exists, it is because everyone lets it happen, submits to it, or even participates in everything that is problematic. And we will have to learn to stop letting this pass as if nothing had happened, to stop enduring, to stop submitting to these laws, to stop being complacent with what we do not approve of, in order not to be excluded, ostracised, to not lose our status or simply to not be disapproved of. We will have to learn to put into words everything we see that is harmful.

And in this context, on our own small scale, we have a responsibility, if we become sufficiently conscious: not only to act according to our convictions, but also, as far as possible, to try to express our disagreements (without seeking to impose anything); and above all, to choose paths and alternatives that are no longer plagued by the dysfunctions we encounter; and in the worst cases, to continue to accept when we are unable to leave a situation that we would like to see improve or disappear.

If we want to contribute to building a healthier society, it is in our interest to speak out when possible.

First of all, denouncing certain abuses is sometimes a way of getting out of them. Because if these abuses are linked to implicit reasoning and unconscious conditioning, bringing this reasoning and conditioning to light often forces us to put an end to them, because once they are made explicit, our consciences can no longer accept them.
Therefore, any information that sheds light on the implicit aspects of an issue can be a vehicle for a solution.

But the key is not so much to denounce, and even less to express oneself aggressively, to be provocative, or to seek revenge for what is unjust. It is much more a question of making visible all those behaviours that go against our values by acting or expressing ourselves in such a way that they no longer have authority over us.

The most important thing is therefore to take the alternative path, explicitly this time. And in some cases, it is very hard to leave what is familiar, to turn our backs on what we appreciate in order to move towards something new that is healthier but not always as easy to live with. But to date, I know of no other way. We cannot change others, and when we try to do so, we will face enormous resistance in the form of denial, minimisation, aggressiveness and mockery. We may be ignored, mocked or fought against. This resistance will only distance us from our goals. It is therefore up to us to bring about change within ourselves, by opening our eyes to other ways out than those we used to take.
Regarding the concept of opposition, I have written an article on this subject, entitled *"From opposition to non-violence"* [208] - [see Ref F].

"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." Gandhi

We will have to learn to persevere in putting words to the unacceptable, whatever its scale, wherever we can, but without ever directly confronting the perpetrators of injustice. If we are not alone in expressing ourselves, our message will carry weight, because even as a minority, we have influence. And once again, the media have a key role to play in accelerating this realisation.

And acting alone is essential, because firstly, even when we are alone in speaking out, we can sometimes be heard. And secondly, we do not necessarily know if others are speaking out at the same time when we send a mail, for example, to a public authority, the media, an association, a company, or even a minister. The impact of our message will depend on the strength of the argument, the kindness of its presentation, the number of people who are speaking out at the same time but whose existence we are often unaware of, and finally, the ability or willingness of the recipients to listen and take our arguments into account. As we can never know the effect of what we say, or the context in which it is heard, it is always better to express ourselves constructively than to keep our arguments to ourselves.

And in the context of the profit culture more specifically, we cannot demand/require reforms, but our behaviours, by making certain dysfunctions visible, will inevitably lead to improvement in the long term.

Those who enjoy the greatest privileges will not immediately understand the transformations taking place in society, as these changes will initially only bring them disadvantages. They will try to prevent these changes because they will only see the disadvantages they bring. They will fight tooth and nail against change. However, as mentalities evolve, it will become increasingly difficult for them to persist in behaviours that are no longer considered acceptable by a growing proportion of the population, and they will eventually come to see these behaviours as inappropriate themselves.
But as long as we leave this unsaid, we will deny them the chance to understand the heart of the problem and prevent them from evolving.

Therefore, the more aware we become of the issues, the greater our responsibility is to no longer participate in them, to express ourselves, and to create the alternative. And these situations are legion.

To better illustrate this process, I will once again use the example of the Weinstein case and the #MeToo movement. The current phenomenon is the beginning of a global awakening among women to what they have always accepted and endured as their lot in life. The most visible parts of the iceberg are rape, prostitution, domestic violence, and femicide. But these are only the most visible and shocking parts of the phenomenon.
Machismo manifests itself in thousands of ways, most often in insidious, unspoken, implicit, indirect, hidden forms, etc. Paula Stone Williams' TEDx talk, *"I've lived as a man & a woman -- here's what I learned"* - already mentioned - gives a very representative overview of these endless abuses of power by men over women [209] - [see Ref 3].

Despite persistent feminist struggles in the past, progress remains minimal, except for the right to vote, contraception and abortion rights, and sometimes a little more gender parity. And suddenly we discover (although we all (women) already knew it implicitly) that injustices against women are deeply rooted in all of our mentalities. And in this context, modify laws to bring about equal rights is rather vain (though not useless), because we are working on the tip of the iceberg, while what lies beneath the water remains monstrous.
Many men, if not all, are also semi-conscious of the problem, but most of them have not yet understood the challenges that this shift entails and remain complacent. However, some of them are also beginning to wake up.
And in this context, it is those who are becoming more conscious who will have to react immediately to every inappropriate behaviour and speak up to demand that it stops.
This can range from gallantry to dirty jokes, contemptuous remarks, condescending tones, aggressiveness, and inappropriate flirting. Every time we remain silent, we are encouraging this behaviour to continue. However, we must be able to choose the right moment and conditions to express ourselves, as it is not desirable to jeopardise our relationships, our jobs or anything else that is important to us if we are not prepared to face the consequences. For there are situations that we cannot leave, or that we are not yet ready to leave. In these situations, it is better to remain cautious while preparing longer-term ways out.

The ongoing evolution of women's rights will most likely extend to other areas, particularly the one discussed in this document: the pursuit of profit and wealth. And it will work in the same way, starting at the top of the iceberg and gradually working its way down to the base, which affects everyone in their daily lives and which we find so difficult to open our eyes to.

e - Leaving our mentality behind will frighten us

Leaving growth behind, ceasing to live according to the interests of money, stopping seeking the pleasures that money allows us, stopping consuming, wasting, polluting, hoarding, showing off, satisfying all our whims, blindly following the dictates of consumption and advertising; yes, abandoning all these behaviours will disturb us, will psychologically call our survival into question, will frighten us, very, very much.
But these fears can be greatly reduced if we are not alone in this endeavour; this will also be a great support to us and will reduce our doubts about the journey.
Another factor that will reduce our fears is understanding the absurdity of the current situation and the dead end it represents, and therefore the relevance of choosing the alternative. It is this awareness of what is at stake that will enable us to commit to this alternative and make a choice from the heart.

It is therefore essential to learn to recognise our fears, to refuse to deny them, to face them head on, to accept them, to accept that we must go through them and to accept that we must no longer act according to them. This cannot be done simply by intention. It is a daily learning process of observing our thoughts and emotions without translating them into action. Many forms of meditation lead to this, as do certain other psychological techniques, such as those mentioned in my article (in French) *"Gestion des pensées - gestion des émotions" (Managing thoughts - managing emotions)* in part three [210] - [see Ref G].

f - The choice of pessimism under the pretext of realism

The current global situation can be considered dire, with all the warning lights flashing red and disasters looming in every area. Our reality does indeed seem to call for the worst kind of pessimism. And yet, all is not lost, and pessimism would be the worst choice for trying to overcome all obstacles. It is the best choice for rushing blindly into the abyss. I do not think that is what we want.
On the contrary, deliberately choosing lucid optimism and stubbornly refusing to give in to defeat and the prevailing pessimism is the only choice that can lead us out of the impasses that lie ahead. It is a deliberate choice to be made, because it does not come naturally in the most difficult situations, and we must therefore consciously choose to take this path. For it is the only state of mind that can yield the best results, and we can no longer afford not to give our best once we have realised this.

To avoid any misunderstanding: optimism does not mean waiting for things to happen, or blindly believing in the success of an endeavour without taking into account the difficulties and uncertainties. On the contrary, optimism involves mobilising the energy that creates the motivation, determination and perseverance necessary to bring the endeavour to a successful conclusion. It is rather the antidote to inertia, indifference, defeatism and submission to fate. It allows us to get back up after every fall. It allows us to keep smiling and hoping when everything is growing dark. It keeps us from giving up in the face of the worst obstacles. And yet it allows us to remain conscious that nothing is a foregone conclusion. And it is precisely this consciousness, linked to the choice to succeed, that boosts the scale of our efforts and our endurance, no matter what happens. And in the current challenges facing humanity, only optimism will give us the opportunity to overcome them successfully. And given the scale of these challenges, this optimism must be stubborn and collaborative. The darker the outlook, the more obstacles we face, the

more the rules of the system paralyse us; the more we will have to boost our morale and overcome conflicts in order to clear the horizon. Without optimism, we are sure to fail.

If we choose this path, we will have to rid ourselves of two main attitudes that are not merely resistance to change, but are in fact real obstacles to change: the exclusive use of rational reasoning (which disregards the role of the heart) and the systematic use of power relations.
This is the subject of the fifth part of this book.

PART FIVE:

THE TWO MAIN PILLARS OF CHANGE: Prioritise the reasons of the heart over Cartesian reasoning and relinquish the balance of power*

A) WHEN OUR SOLUTIONS MAINTAIN THE PROBLEM WHILE MAKING IT LESS VISIBLE

"Problems can never be solved by the way of thinking that first created them." Albert Einstein

* The concept of 'rapport de force' used in the original French text, can be translated in various ways into English: 'balance of power', 'power struggle', 'power relationship', 'power dynamic" or 'power game'. The French word 'rapport' implies most frequently unequal relationship and domination or authority, unlike the English word ‘balance', which may or may not imply a more equal relationship, or a stable or harmonious situation that is excluded in the French expression.

To begin this chapter, I would like to start with a truly exemplary situation, which consists of a chain of solutions proposed to solve a problem that, while bearing some fruit, maintain the root of the problem completely intact.

In the wake of the *#BlackLivesMatter* movement, which gained momentum following the death of George Floyd in the spring of 2020, social media has been criticised for allowing hatred and racism to be spread with impunity. And their executives, who enrich themselves at the expense of users through advertising, are not taking enough responsibility to stop this from happening. The *#StopHateForProfit* boycott campaign was therefore launched by several associations, and it was through multinationals that agreed to contribute to it by temporarily suspending their advertising investments on certain social media platforms in order to pressure them to implement very strict rules concerning racism and hate speech on these same platforms and to enforce them. [211]

This is a typical example of the kind of reasoning that still involves the problem, in more ways than one.
The very fact that it is multinational companies that are doing the boycotting, by giving themselves huge publicity when announcing their participation in this campaign, makes the supposed pressure more than questionable.
It seems quite likely to me that there is an agreement, if only tacit or implicit, between each of the multinationals participating in this action and the social networks concerned.
Furthermore, as the boycott is very limited in time, this implies that the threat is rather slight.

But above all – as in the case of TF1 in 2004 – the demand by social media users for multinationals to act on their behalf, rather than taking responsibility by leaving these social networks en masse, sends an extremely clear message: that citizens choose to continue to voluntarily expose themselves to all the abuses and manipulations that occur on these social networks, believing that it is up to others to solve their problems.

And the very name of this campaign, *"No to hate for profit"*, implicitly demonstrates that all users are willing to allow others to profit at their expense.

Furthermore, regardless of the scope of the rules that will be put in place, it is completely impossible to filter billions of messages every day to determine whether they convey racism or hatred. Artificial intelligence software and algorithms will, of course, be able to stop some of them, and even stop others that are not racist but use similar words. But they will be completely powerless against hateful messages that use innuendo, insinuation, manipulation, etc. This is all the more true when hatred and racism are diluted throughout a chain of messages using insidious communication methods which, in the long term, constitute harassment and have the same, if not more devastating, effect on those who are subjected to them and are therefore defenceless. For racism does not consist solely of hateful diatribes, but above all in the omnipresence of small signs, acts, insinuations, and of the systemisation of being ignored or left out; which may go unnoticed by the observer and cannot always be proven, but which are perceived and felt in a violent way by those who are targeted. And they become particularly destructive through their repetition and the fact that they are not explicit and are therefore not perceived, deliberately ignored or even denied by observers, which means that they cannot be recognised, let alone defended against.

To this it must be added that it is unthinkable to envisage a clear limit, acceptable to all, concerning what can and cannot be said. This means that there will still be messages that pass through the filters and whose intention is racist or which will be perceived as such by the people targeted, and that other non-racist messages will be unfairly blocked.

If your water pipes are made of lead and the water flowing through them comes from a polluted river, putting a colander under the tap will not give you drinking water. What you need is not a filter, but to change the pipes and obtain water from a spring, a well or a water treatment plant. As long as we operate on advertisement for the benefit of profit-hungry multinationals via social media networks that are fundamentally incapable (and, in the absence of any real will) of stopping the continual abuses that are conveyed there, it is completely illusory to hope to reduce racism by calling on the leaders of these multinationals and social media networks.

Therefore, even if it is not impossible that this campaign will bring about real positive change, it will never be able to get to the root of the problem it denounces. Because if it is the essence of our mentalities that needs to be changed, it is not by using the pillars of this mentality (multinationals, social networks, advertising) that we will be able to achieve this.

We cannot demand/require that people not be racist: it is a whole learning process to achieve this, because racism is inherent in the culture in which it manifests itself. And by taking the path of prohibiting racism, we even risk increasing it (*"what you resist persists"*), but in a much more perverse way. And the problem of racism is just one example among many. Because in *#StopHateForProfit*, we could replace "hate" with misery, poverty, injustice, inequality, sexism. But it is precisely the profit-driven mentality itself (which implies the domination of some over others, and inequality)... it is this mentality that makes possible all the consequences we are fighting against.

This campaign is therefore exemplary of our tendency, in the face of so many abuses in society, to provide responses that are themselves still imbued with the mindset that is at the root of these abuses.

In contrast to this first example, here is a second one that gives a glimpse of the direction we need to take. It is an interesting experiment that took place in France in 2021. It consisted of sending 14 people to live in a cave for 40 days, isolated from the world.
Here are two comments from participants, collected following this experiment during an interview featured in the RTBF article (in French) *"Expédition Deep Time : 14 scientifiques passent 40 jours dans une grotte pour comprendre comment l'homme s'adapte pour sa survie" (Deep Time Expedition: 14 scientists spend 40 days in a cave to understand how humans adapt for survival)* (2021):

"When we all think alike, it is extremely difficult to find solutions to new situations in life. And when there are several different ways of thinking, then the construction of each of these thoughts becomes a new way of thinking that enables life rather than survival."

"When you are working cooperatively, with a desire to succeed, you can find all the solutions you need." [212]

To find solutions to our problems, it is therefore essential to think outside the box, abandon our outdated ways of operating, and do so in a spirit of cooperation.

And to achieve this, we must learn to free ourselves from the current problematic mindset, which is driven by two main factors: the rationality as the sole source of our decisions, and the balance of power.

B) PRIVILEGE THE REASONS OF THE HEART OVER CARTESIAN REASONING

1. Introduction

"The first prison is that of mechanical thinking, which fragments our vision of the world, denies our intelligence and creativity, reduces our potential and our being in the world, and mutilates us as well as nature, reducing us to mere raw materials intended for the money machine. Changing our vision is the most important step we can take to transform our lives and the world we are part of. The resurgence of authenticity goes in the first place through the knowledge of the living dimension of reality and intelligence." [213]

Vandana Shiva in her book *"Oneness vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom"* (2019) [214]- New Internationalist Publications Ltd Publisher [see Ref 39]

There are a series of cognitive biases in our Western mentality concerning our logical mind. Firstly, we express ourselves and behave as if all our ways of thinking were based on rational foundations. Secondly, we refer to rationality as if it were the only way to consider reality through the objectivity sought in science, through all technological, computer and now robotic and artificial intelligence developments. Furthermore, when we defend a point of view or present an argument that is supposed to be rational, we are rarely conscious that our reasoning is very often influenced by many other factors, primarily our emotions.
And we cling to our Cartesian logic, even when it prevents us from achieving our goals. This obstinacy can sometimes lead us to maintain, or even exacerbate, what we want to leave behind, through the rebound effect it can cause, or through our blindness to other ways out. We are so conditioned by these patterns that we persist in trusting certain "experts", even when they lead us down the wrong path.

2. We mistakenly assume that all our thoughts are rational in essence (except in cases of insanity or certain slippages)

Human beings, even if they claim to be rational or objective, are often much less so than they imagine. This is true on both a personal and collective level.
As long as our behaviours, most of which are conditioned, remain within a certain norm – which is more or less elastic depending on the environment and situation – we assume that everyone thinks in a relatively logical manner. Everyone claims to have common sense and simply believes they are right in most areas where they have formed an opinion, always ready to think that anyone who thinks differently from them does not understand, lacks information, is badly influenced or is being manipulated. And the tendency to want to convince (or even pressure) others is very common. Anyone who deviates from this absolute rule

and therefore openly operates outside of Cartesian thinking – consciously or unconsciously – is labelled crazy or considered marginal or eccentric, except in the context of art, where anything goes.

However, whether we like it or not, all our reasoning is coloured by our psychology (intentions, conditioning, beliefs, impulses, emotions, etc.), and this is mostly unconscious.
To better understand this, here is a short TEDx talk (in French) entitled *"A la découverte de notre cerveau" (Discovering our brain)* given by Albert Moukheiber (2016), which explains it clearly with some very compelling examples. [215]- [see Ref 16].

Human thought, which functions naturally, automatically and unconsciously within each of our brains, is never questioned. We take it for granted that it is healthy, which leads us to repeat, perpetuate and reiterate all our erroneous thoughts, all our dysfunctional automatic thoughts, as if nothing was the matter. And so, our own way of thinking can lock ourselves and make it impossible for us to open up to other ways of thinking.

Stéphanie Brillant, in her book (in French) *"L'incroyable pouvoir du souffle"* (*The Incredible Power of Breath*) (2021), published by Actes Sud, sums this up in the following quote:

> *"The big problem with thinking is that if we don't stop it from time to time, we always think the same thing and quickly become like a broken record!"* [216]

Our civilisation does indeed function like a broken record, where we are surprised to find ourselves repeating history without really knowing why.

Creativity, intuition, imagination, emotions and feelings can all function outside of thought, and it is therefore necessary to be able to step outside our minds in order to better understand ourselves, to become more conscious, to better manage each of these abilities.
According to Stéphanie Brillant:

> *"...thinking too much poisons us."* [217]

More often than we imagine, our minds deceive us.

In this context, those who claim to be the most objective are often the least so. And everyone constructs a mask of normality behind which they hide their less acceptable faults or tendencies, which, in general, have nothing to do with rationality.

> Quantum physics challenges the reliability of our rational reasoning:
> The scientific discoveries of the past century in quantum physics really tease us when we realise that the result of an experiment is influenced by the observer. A very good explanation of this can be found online at (in English). [218] - [see Ref 7] or via any search engine with the phrase *"what the bleep entanglement*".
> What has become obvious at the particle scale is not necessarily so at the human scale. But it is becoming possible to conceive that our concrete, material life is only a reflection of the mental constructs that govern our thoughts, emotions and behaviours. It is not so much our thoughts that are reflected in reality as our intentions, emotions and, above all, our beliefs, all of which give direction to our thoughts.

And, depending on the circumstances, it is not so much the coherence of our thoughts as other types of mental processes that will combine in one way or another, without our knowledge, to guide or distort our decisions.

In reality, as we rarely pay attention to the source of the thoughts that guide our choices, we simply assume that we function in a logical, coherent manner and that it is 'reason' that guides our steps. However, this is very often not the case at all, and we find it difficult to acknowledge this, except perhaps in the case of romantic love, where we hide behind the adages 'love is blind' or 'love has its reasons that reason does not understand'; Or in the case of anger, when, after the fact, we apologise by saying that "our words exceeded our thoughts"; when in fact, it was our emotions that biased our thoughts, which were then translated into words.
We can therefore have different ways of interpreting reality, depending on our emotional state, but most of the time we ignore this aspect and believe ourselves to be consistent and stable in our thoughts. Some men even claim to be more stable and rational in their thoughts than women, explaining this by the hormonal changes that affect women monthly and during pregnancy, or by repeating the age-old saying that women are more emotional. In reality, however, hormones allow women to be much more aware of the instability of their thoughts during these periods, but also outside of them, which is much less accessible to men, who are not spared from this phenomenon.

And even if on a personal level, we may be willing to admit that the “reasons” behind our actions are not always entirely rational; we tend to think that the functioning of the society in which we live (I am referring to Western or capitalist society, which has colonised almost all communities in the world) is conversely well and truly organised on rational grounds. Legislation, scientific knowledge, economics, social systems, infrastructure, and all the administration that this entails at all levels are extremely complex and are based mainly on technology and apparent rationality. And we assume that we live in a form of democracy, where our representatives meet to manage, decide, and develop all this complexity at all levels.

However, in all these areas, rationality is only apparent, or at least, decisions and the organisation of this complexity are only partly dictated by coherent reasoning. For in many cases, behind decisions and organisations based on relatively coherent foundations, there also lie many hidden means derived from the desires, impulses, errors, ignorance, incompetence, whims, abuses and corruption of those who are the instigators.
Therefore, even if at certain levels, decisions, ideas, opinions or research are reliable, their implementation can sometimes prove to be rather dubious. And when the complexity of the entire system is added to the mix, i.e. the combination of all these implementations, errors, shortcomings and malfunctions are everywhere, even if they are not always visible or significant enough to constitute a real handicap for the community. All roads lead to Rome. Some take the motorways, others take country roads, but many take quite a few detours, and in some cases even go around the globe three times before reaching their destination. And unfortunately, some never arrive. We generally only see those who reach their destination, without realising that some get quite lost along the way.

This results in injustices and inequalities, accidents and disasters, absurdities and destruction, even if, on the surface, everything seems to be working. But in the long run, none of this can last. Because in many places, it is the foundations that lack consistency.

Pretending to provide solutions through rationality can therefore often consist of satisfying unconscious motivations that we colour with reasoning that appears to be entirely Cartesian. In this way, lies, manipulation and errors can be passed off as entirely rational solutions.

We can also cite the example of prodigious inventiveness in the field of weaponry and war strategies. Human beings have invented the worst horrors in the fields of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, often under the pretext of self-defence, when such weapons are in no way a means of defence since they kill mainly innocent people on a massive scale, and their use can only be the result of a bellicose tendency or monstrous mindlessness. And we will always find a good cause to justify the worst, or we will highlight humanity, camaraderie, solidarity, heroism, or unexpected generosity in the actions that may accompany the horror, in order to mitigate or mask it.

This is the case in the following example, which made headlines in the media in June 2023. The video shows the feat achieved with the help of a Ukrainian drone to rescue the last survivor in a Russian trench. Those controlling the drone are sensitised by the Russian soldier's mimed distress calls. And rather than destroying him like all his comrades lying on the ground, the drone guides him to the Ukrainian base camp so that he can surrender and survive. What humanity! viewers will say. When in reality, the drones killed all the other soldiers, and the army is using the video taken by the device to redeem itself in the eyes of the population.

Here we are at the heart of the utter nonsense of war: the rescue of an enemy soldier begging to be allowed to live makes the headlines, as if, after slaughtering all the others, we had done a good deed. The video was published by the Washington Post in June 2023 and was relayed by the Western media.[219]

We are reaching a form of reality TV horror. Because, for sure, it thrills those who watch it. Yet all the bodies torn apart in the trenches were torn apart by those who fly the drone that will save the last one. But all the soldiers sent into the trenches know that going into battle is unavoidable, because if they refuse, their own side will kill them. Viewers in Europe and the US will therefore rejoice at the battle won, feel sympathy for the soldier saved, and be proud of, admire or be grateful to the Ukrainian army, completely forgetting the reality of all the deaths that it will have cost on both sides.

Our culture in the West, and in particular the culture of profit, is also based on biased reasoning. It is presented as the result of democracy or a market economy, when in fact it has been developed step by step by people who are only pursuing their own interests and who have managed to use their power and influence to indirectly get everyone to serve their interests, which they have portrayed as fair, reasonable and honest, when in reality it's quite the opposite. One could not even say that they are acting in bad faith. Their belief system allows them to think that what they have built is fair, reasonable and honest for the caste to which they belong, without being able to take into account other human beings, other living beings, the environment as a whole, and future generations.

As we evolve in consciousness, we will no longer pass off as rational choices those that are guided by selfish interests, or under the influence of negative emotions, or even by reflex or instinct.
This is explained very well in Thierry Janssen's book *"Vivre en paix"* (Living in Peace), (2014)] [220] - [see Ref 17],
from which the article I wrote to present the book reflects some of these aspects. [221] - [see Ref H].

3. Taking our rationality as our sole reference, our only benchmark, as the only valid and effective one...

In addition to considering ourselves reasonable thinkers, we also mistakenly assume that the proper functioning of our societies must be based on reason. In this context, rationality, Cartesian thinking, logic and reasoning are considered indispensable tools for dealing with the challenges and difficult situations we encounter. Relationships, communication, emotions, feelings, desires, motivations, intuition, creativity, impulses, and chance events—which are nevertheless the other drivers of our thoughts, intentions, decisions, and actions—are given little or no consideration, and are sometimes even dismissed as harmful, except in the context of artistic expression.

But life is not a matter of rationality. By thwarting our nature, we distance ourselves from our roots, our essence, life itself, and we disregard the life around us. This is all the more harmful because, by denying the place of these other faculties, they take over our objectivity without our knowledge, rather than serving us when we use them consciously.

Consequently, constantly viewing our conceptions through a Cartesian lens prevents us from truly understanding both what we are experiencing and the context in which we are experiencing it.

And this starts at school, in science and mathematics classes, where objectivity, logic and numbers are the essential references, and where relativity has no place except in Einstein's theories. We will discuss this further in the chapter on education, which reflects our entire system of rational thinking, and its flaws, in an educational framework that is often lacking.

This continues in the economy, which does not serve human. All production and trade operate according to what can be quantified: the quantities produced, their weight, their shelf life, their price, the distance they must be transported, their expiry dates, the proportions of ingredients and additives, the number of calories, vitamins, trace elements and other measurements, engine power, number of years of warranty, number of employees, salary levels, number of days of leave, number of sick days, etc.
and, of course, turnover, yields, earnings, dividends: profit.

And what cannot be quantified is simply not really taken into account. Even "human resources" will seek to quantify and code data: age, years of experience, number of degrees, IQ or personality test results.
Although human is part of the department's title, his value is simply swept aside by the word 'resources', which does nothing more than materialise, and therefore quantify, the human cattle put to work.

When a company does not produce figures, it is not considered viable or useful to society, or it will be burdened with a whole battery of administrative tasks to quantify and transform into data what is, in essence, impossible to objectivise. The benefits to humans are not part of the equation, except when they can be translated into hard cash, as in the entertainment industry, for example. Even retirement homes, whose primary purpose should be the well-being of the elderly, have for the most part become commercial enterprises whose primary goal is profit, at the expense of staff numbers and quality of services, which so often leads to situations of neglect and abuse. More details on this subject can be found on internet. [222]

We have lost sight of the fact that the economy is there to serve people. And rather than using money to exchange fruit for vegetables, we have created a whole system based on numbers, accounting, mathematics, statistics, probabilities, logarithms and the like, laden with diagrams, percentages, dividends, interest rates, quotations, values, exchange rates and speculation. There are numbers everywhere you look. Only quantifiable values count, with heartfelt values having been removed from the scenario. Not only does this result in suffering and destruction, but it is life itself that we are decimating.

GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is the ultimate reflection of this mindset, which means that when a war causes damage, it increases GDP because the trade generated by reconstruction will create jobs and simply allow profits to be made. And this also applies to all disasters, traffic jams, and polluting, useless, harmful production.

Rationality is not harmful in itself, far from it. It is even indispensable, but it is preferable to combine it with other skills and avoid using it exclusively. It is only one tool among many. For our logic-based reasoning to be used wisely, it is necessary for consciousness to be in control. Consciousness is beyond our thoughts, and the more awake it is, the more it is guided by the heart.

In her book "Oneness vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom" (2019) [223] - New Internationalist Publications Ltd Publisher, Vandana Shiva talks about mechanical thinking and technological

fundamentalism - which corresponds to this systematic recourse to rationality. She describes the consequences of this type of thinking:

> *"Mechanical thinking is also militarised thinking. It relies on violence and engenders it. It is ontologically violent because it declares nature dead; it is epistemically violent because it destroys our ability to think and act as integral parts of nature, to be its non-violent co-creators; it is ecologically violent because, through its ignorance, it disrupts the processes that maintain organisms, ecosystems and the Earth itself alive; finally, it is socially violent because it is blind to and proscribes the living knowledge of women, peasants and indigenous cultures, knowledge that the whole world desperately needs in order to heal the planet and society. Mechanical thinking is privatising thinking; it contributes to the annexation of the common goods of nature, society and knowledge through biopiracy. While appropriating, pirating and patenting traditional knowledge, it leads to build an artificial wall or 'frontier of creation'. This knowledge is then presented as an 'innovation' or 'invention' and privatised through patents.* [224]

Vandana Shiva also points to this aspect in the context of the headlong rush towards technological development, driven by relentless commercialisation:

> *"Not only does technological fundamentalism reduce the reason for being of technology to mere industrial and violent tools, but it also reverses the means-end relationship. The deployment and use of industrial technologies are no longer a means to higher ecological, ethical, social and human ends; they have become an end in themselves, a new religion."* [225]

As long as we operate in a world where everyone believes themselves to be rational, and where rationality is the benchmark – and these are two sides of the same coin – we can only dig ourselves deeper into the very dysfunctions that we denounce.

4. Our resort to rationality often leads us to be fooled: a splint on a wooden leg

By persisting in the belief that we always think rationally and wanting to use this supposed rationality in all aspects of life, we are seriously deceiving ourselves.

One of the most common drifts of biased use of rationality is linked to the fact that we often use it to solve a problem superficially, a bit like putting a bandage on an unsterilised wound, rather than going to the root of the problem.

This is also typically the case with painkillers (or other medicines) used to erase pain, when we are simply masking the pain without addressing the source of the dysfunction that caused it. And insidiously, behind the scenes, a pathology may develop that could endanger our health in the future; in addition, in some cases, there may be long-term side effects from the medication in question.

The logic behind this attitude seems implacable: pain - painkiller. And we have science on our side to prove that the effect of the medication is statistically significant, justifying the miracle solution: fast, effective, no need to look for complications. And we are capable of applying this type of response, which appears logical and consistent, to most of the obstacles we face.

This is just one fairly representative example of the use of rationality disconnected from our emotions, feelings, intuition, creativity and a form of wisdom linked to experience and knowledge. And this applies to all areas. Pretending to focus on the rigour, logic and objectivity of science does not necessarily lead to the most effective and lasting achievements or solutions.

The real discoveries for overcoming obstacles and resolving conflicts are often very surprising, and even very simple, and it is impossible to imagine them based on purely logical reasoning. This is because using rationality while ignoring the more sensitive aspects of our humanity will cause us to focus on visible or superficial aspects, without being able to take perspective and understand the whole context. And rigorous study of these superficial aspects, however complex and thorough it may be, is unlikely to lead to the root cause of the situation, except in the case of purely mechanical causes.

In the context of the culture of profit, global warming and male domination, we risk treading water as long as we are content to seek only mechanical solutions, such as laws, rights, obligations and prohibitions, as well as technological inventions. At best, we will be able to create realities such as those described in Aldous Huxley's book *"Brave New World"* (1932) Harper Collins Publishers [226] - [see Ref 18] or George Orwell's *"1984"* (1949) Penguin Publishers. [227] - [see Ref 35].

And until we are able to shift our ways of thinking, we will not be able to access the solutions of the heart, as we will simply be incapable of imagining them, or even understanding what they consist of.

Yet they do exist, although they are not yet widely used; they can be found more often at a very local level.
To better understand this, let us take the example of two neighbours trying to resolve a dispute over the boundary of their garden. Several options are available to them: open conflict, or even legal action; latent conflict, where they no longer speak to each other and remain in the status quo, thus without a solution; or the choice of a rational solution through measurements, comparisons, etc., where each party makes concessions – carefully calculating that they are balanced so that no one feels cheated. All these attitudes and solutions are based on rationality: calculation, comparison of each one's rights, or recourse to the law, justice, or balance of power. By leaving all these registers behind and communicating, they might be able to decide to share their garden, for example, by redesigning it, occupying it together or alternately, or even finding other solutions that are much more creative than I can imagine at the moment. This is the choice made, for example, by citizens who decide to create a co-housing community, pooling some of their private property without compromising their privacy.
All this does not exclude the rational aspect, but above all opens the way to other ways of thinking that are closer to the heart.

5. A solution that has no effect – however rational it may be – is not a solution.

Another factor contributing to failure or counter-productivity – when we want to use reason without calling on other faculties – is linked to the power of persuasion of those who defend their cause through reason. In the case of collective dysfunction, whatever the scale (family, company, region, nation, etc.), when someone makes a rational proposal to resolve it, there is no guarantee that this proposal will be endorsed by their community. This is because, in general, the issues at stake are not on the side of reason, but rather on the side of feelings or emotions (power relations, fears, complacency, etc.).

When we come up against fierce resistance from those who stubbornly reject a rational proposal for change (which is not a plaster on a wooden leg, which could satisfy everyone, but whose means of implementation are not understood or are met with denial or resistance), it is then necessary to open our eyes and realise that what we are trying to bring about is not adequate. Not so much intrinsically, but what we are proposing is not feasible because, under the conditions we find ourselves in (those of not being able to make the merits of this solution heard), we are unable to implement it. This is therefore another area where rationality does not always lead to real progress. For, when we propose quick, effective, logical and consistent solutions, but are faced with a multitude of obstacles that make them impossible to implement – whether practical obstacles or those caused by the will of others – it means that these methods, however rational they may be, are not suited to the situation, and that others, perhaps less

logical, more difficult or slower to implement, or less practical, are probably better, because they will succeed.

It is circumstances, our experience and our intuition that will enable us to choose between a rational solution that we must persevere in proposing, and which could, but without guarantee, eventually be adopted, or an alternative solution, which probably rules out the initial proposal in the longer term, but which is more likely to be accepted one day, and more quickly.

6. A teaching system that reflects our entire system of rational thinking and its flaws, in an upbringing framework that is often lacking

If we look at the school programmes, the entire system is based on rational thinking. We still give priority to mathematics, science, languages, history (almost exclusively the history of victors, dates and borders), and even in optional subjects: dead languages, art and economics. I am not denying the value and importance of these subjects. But their importance is relative. Not only because there are more essential and fundamental skills that are simply not taught, and are not even considered for teaching, but also because these subjects are not essential for everyone.

It is considered that children receive, through their parents' education, all the learning necessary to become capable of managing their bodies, communication, relationships, emotions and thoughts. However, we are very far from this. At least for the majority of children. Because we are not all equal when it comes to education, and in reality, few parents today have received an education in these areas, and without having received it, they are unable to pass it on or even consider it useful to do so.

But let's start with education, the kind given by our parents.
Historically in Europe, a certain type of education was passed down from generation to generation, including rules of politeness and conduct and therefore basic communication, very often very precise Christian values, including rules related to religious dogma and rituals, as well as more cultural basics concerning hygiene, nutrition and other ways of managing daily life and health. And in more privileged circles, education could go much further culturally, through the learning of "good manners" (social etiquette), the mother tongue and other languages, current affairs, art, etc.

1968 was a turning point. Taboos were broken, injustices were denounced, and all the obsolete rules that imprisoned the youth in meaningless conformity were discarded. But we went so far in the process that we also discarded some of the education and rules that allowed us to respect the most essential social values. In this way, we gained new rights, more freedom, and greater access to creativity. And that's a good thing. But we have also created counter-references to the mentality we were trying to leave behind, in aspects such as: "prohibit prohibiting", "unlimited freedom of expression", "down with political correctness", "stop censorship".
Provocation and subversion have thus replaced taboos. We have gone from one extreme to the other, to the point of developing fads that consist of doing the opposite of what we did before. Non-conformism reigns supreme. And excesses have been experimented with in all areas: drugs, sex, new musical genres, new spiritualities, and all kinds of communal living experiences (the hippie movement). We have partly "come back" from the excesses in these areas, but without always finding the right balance.

And in the process, in an effort to do away with the overly strict rules of the past and the abuses that resulted from them, we stopped teaching our children the most essential rules, while developing the concept of the child as king, without fully considering the consequences. By removing the rules, we wanted children to discover for themselves what was good for them, while respecting others. But too often without really knowing how to guide them along this path, and even more often by abdicating our role as educators. And in some cases, we ended up giving our children everything we would have liked to receive

when we were young, in our fantasies specific to that age. The children of the post-68 generation therefore no longer had the necessary guidelines to reach the maturity or wisdom of adulthood. And they can only pass on to their children what they know, i.e. an education poor in values and limits. I am exaggerating, of course, and this is certainly not universal, but it is nevertheless very widespread. These aspects can be observed in many situations. And in the absence of education, references are found on the internet, on television and on social media. And these are not usually the best.

A caricatural example of this is sex education. In the past, sex education was virtually non-existent, replaced by taboos and prohibitions: no sex before marriage, and that was that. Nowadays, apart from the odd lesson here and there, a bit like the occasional cultural visit with the school, it is rather pornographic references that, for many teenagers today, serve as the sex education they receive too rarely or too minimally from their parents or at school, and often disconnected from the emotional sphere.
And if you are unaware of the reality of these films or refuse to acknowledge their destructive content, do not hesitate to watch Maria Ahlin's short TEDx talk, *"Let's Talk Porn"* (17'38" - 2019), which details many aspects of the issue without forcing you to watch the images in question [228] - [see Ref 11]. Better no sex education than this kind of education.

We can also mention the harmful psychological aspects indirectly taught by today's media: manipulation through all kinds of advertising and marketing techniques, voyeurism and exhibitionism via reality TV, harassment via social networks and media lynching in certain press outlets, violence via films and television series as well as video games, competitiveness, power relations and nationalism via sporting events and the commercialisation thereof, as well as the importance of status, the appeal of wealth and male domination, implicitly conveyed through all of the above-mentioned areas.

In a way, our current society is working in the opposite direction to that of quality education. On the other hand, the amount of time parents devote to their children is decreasing in many families. This is because many parents simply do not have the time to devote to their children, either because both parents work, because families are blended or single-parent households, or because smartphones, television and computers take precedence over family interaction, etc.

Added to this type of lacunary education is a teaching system that does not necessarily provide children with the keys to becoming adults. This is because the teaching system is much less about helping young people become adults who know how to cope with life, socialise positively and fulfil their potential, than it is about fitting them into a 'professional' box, learning to obey, learning to conform, and thus becoming sheep-like citizens who follow the rules and keep quiet, with the compensation of a salary that allows for comfort, consumption and overconsumption, and commercial leisure activities based on easy pleasures that are far removed from real conviviality and warm human relationships.
I am not saying that all this is intentional, but it is the weight of the past that has not yet been enlighted by today's reality. In much the same way as the Catholic Church is taking an immense amount of time to clean up its abuse of power, sexual abuse, and the like (women still remain absent from the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which raises serious questions).
Awareness is still growing extremely slowly, hampered by a multitude of denials, which are themselves the consequence of the fact that those who are trying to reform education have themselves been trained and conditioned by the implicit principles that it conveys.

Only logical and linguistic abilities are favoured by this school system, while creativity, intuition, curiosity, spontaneity, dexterity, the importance of healthy communication, psychology, and quite simply the gifts of each child are ignored to the point of making children repeat a year when they fail in these subjects recognised as useful, without even attempting to develop their own gifts.
These other skills and areas of learning are mentioned in the curricula, but are supposed to be developed transversally through traditional lessons, without much detail on how to achieve this, which shows how

little importance is attached to them. Furthermore, the entire system is based on theoretical learning that makes very little use of practical, everyday applications.

And all this takes place in a context of power relations that are much more significant than necessary. Alternative teaching methods, by their very existence, prove that this is not necessary. Not all teachers abuse their power, not all teachers shout at pupils, not all teachers hand out punishments galore, but this is still very much present and tolerated in education. And in this way, the power relationship is instilled as inevitable.

And while much of the school curriculum is indirectly aimed at preparing pupils to prepare for a profession, in reality, most pupils will never use this content once they leave school.

Yet we continue to seek to reform basic education, but we always play the same cards: language, maths, science and history lessons, etc. We persist in teaching children and teenagers highly theoretical content that is far removed from their current and future needs, and far removed from the more human aspects of life.
What is the point of learning mathematical reasoning: sine, cosine, tangent, logarithm, equations; when we have not even learnt the basics of simply thinking healthily?
What is the point of learning language as a vehicle for communication, as well as communication in terms of spelling, grammar, syntax, poetry and literature, through learning to read, write, summarise, analyse and write essays, etc.? if we do not learn to communicate healthily between individuals, with those around us: to express our thoughts clearly, to listen, to make requests, to express our needs and disagreements, to resolve disputes, to respect those we are talking to?
What is the point of knowing about science, Mendeleev's periodic table, the laws of physics or the composition of cells, the anatomy of the body, if these theories are disconnected from the reality of real life: food, health, hygiene, body image, etc.?
The same applies to learning history, geography and economics in a scientific, theoretical and objective context, where rationalism permeates every level.

All these subjects should only be considered once the skills needed to live properly, healthily and in harmony with our human and non-human surroundings have been integrated. Namely: thought management, emotion management, relational communication, body management (nutrition, sleep, hygiene, health, exercise, sexuality).

This is an almost perfect illustration of Einstein's quote mentioned above:

> *"Problems can never be solved by the way of thinking that first created them."*

No one would think of sending a child who cannot yet speak or walk to driving school. In the same way, we should choose to pass on essential knowledge to our children before teaching them things that the vast majority of them will no longer use once they leave school, or that only serve to prepare them for the economic, administrative and academic world of work and pave the way for all kinds of *bullshit jobs*.

And the more the first lessons are integrated, the easier the next ones will be. Because learning communication, thought and emotion management will play a major role in stress management, time management, self-confidence, motivation, and even concentration and memory quality.

But above all, if these basic lessons are integrated, they will allow for a better grounding in reality, more harmonious social integration, a sharp decrease in violence and a corresponding increase in the capacity for empathy. And they can form a real bulwark against all the excesses we are experiencing. And it is precisely because we are unable to imagine the importance of the upheavals that such education and teaching would bring about on a collective level that we continue to cling to our old patterns, systematically reproducing what we have always done, and increasingly unable to manage the results.

Until we ourselves understand the need for psychological transformation and begin this process of change, we will not be able to understand the need for a paradigm shift and we will continue to do as we have always done, while bequeathing to our children the same modes of functioning that will lead them to repeat history, to base all their references on the Cartesian mind and power games, and to pass this on to their own children.

The pandemic, and its successive lockdowns, have proven these aspects to some extent. When schools closed and distance learning had to be considered, the only objectives were to continue teaching the usual subjects, without taking into account the socialisation aspect, cooperative learning, and entertainment for children and adolescents. nor the other benefits that school provides when children live in dysfunctional families, in poverty, or have a disability, handicap or illness.
The main objective was to keep up with the school curriculum, without paying too much attention to the well-being of pupils or the related learning opportunities offered by schooling.
A study indirectly demonstrates the consequences of this. Contrary to the title of the article (in French) presenting it, namely: *"Le Covid-19 est 'accélérateur d'injustices et bourreau des droits de l'enfant' " (Covid-19 is an 'accelerator of injustice and torturer of children's rights')*; I believe that it is not so much Covid-19 that is responsible for such drifts, but rather our own conceptions of education, which persist in confining themselves to teaching the various traditional subjects: maths, science, languages, history, geography, etc. [229]
On the other hand, it is the pandemic and its consequences that have made it possible to begin to highlight these shortcomings in our conceptions.
While pure and simple teaching can be done remotely using the possibilities offered by the internet, it is also possible to use the internet to create other aspects of schooling, and even beyond that, to bring children into contact with each other, provide them with entertainment, and promote group life, communication and cooperation between pupils. Nor can I claim that "all we have to do is", because these challenges are certainly not easy to implement simply by connecting to a computer. However, there is nothing in the news to suggest that such objectives have even been considered. Yet these skills will indeed be used again in adulthood, and they immediately determine the well-being of each pupil, which is not the case with learning traditional subjects.

You have no idea how much I doubt what I have just written about education. I have never read such a radical opinion anywhere else and do not know if others share the view I have just expressed. I realise how shocking it can be to question something that everyone seems to take for granted.
However, I am also aware of how much our children, and all of us, lack guidance in our education when it comes to simply managing everyday life: relating to others constructively, managing our bodies, our health, our emotions, our minds, knowing our needs and how to satisfy them without harming others or the environment.

When we reach adolescence and adulthood, we have very little to go on when it comes to managing our love lives, becoming parents, and knowing how to raise our children. We do it instinctively, roughly reproducing what we ourselves have received, or based on what we have found in our reading, at the cinema, on television, on the internet, or through other spheres of influence that are not necessarily recommendable. But could you tell me what use any of the following are in all this: Pythagoras' theorem, Mendeleev's periodic table, the theory of relativity, the date of the Battle of Marignan, Greek and Latin declensions – to name but a few of the concepts and subjects that punctuate our school career? And what percentage of students will use such knowledge in their future careers? How will all this help them in the future to truly meet their needs, defend themselves against abuse, online harassment, the influence of advertising or harmful cultural content, manipulation and scams, and avoid becoming manipulators, abusers, aggressors, dishonest people, harassers, etc. themselves?
How will this prepare men to respect women and women to avoid male domination?

How will they be prepared to cope with failure, bereavement, illness, loneliness and the array of setbacks that life never spares us from having to go through?

We spend 12 years of our lives, most of the hours in the day, and most of our days, listening to and absorbing knowledge and transcribing it onto paper, or even onto a screen, without really knowing why.

And when, at 30, 40, or 50, we find ourselves in trouble, at an impasse, or in doubt, we have long since forgotten most of what we learned, unless it has remained buried deep in our memory, never to resurface. And the few bits of knowledge that can actually be useful to us (physical education, ethics, citizenship education, technology or algebra classes, or even sexuality education, learning to deal with the media or advertising, etc.) are generally considered to be secondary, or even anecdotal for some. And moving up to the next class is not dependent on success in these areas.

As for the financial aspect, apart from a few anecdotal lessons, we do not learn how to manage our money. We have absolutely no knowledge of the relationship between professions and the corresponding salary levels. We have no knowledge of the most effective and secure ways to save, or of the ethics behind financial products and banking mechanisms. And when it comes to choosing between higher education or a professional training, we have little to go on except for the odd university lecture offering us information, more like an advertisement, and again in a random way that is secondary to the main curriculum. Similarly, professions and studies are not presented to us in terms of the needs of society or the cost of the training that prepares us for them.

The above was written between 2018 and 2021, and therefore partly ignores the ongoing reform of French-language fundamental education in Belgium. I do not know what the situation is in other countries. Having briefly glanced through some excerpts from the new guidelines that came into force in 2022 [230], I realise that changes are beginning to appear. Some learning is being delayed, others are being made more concrete, and new, more useful subjects are being added. But overall, if the change were to actually be implemented, each teacher would have to go back to school for a few weeks or months to be able to teach these new courses competently. As this does not seem to be planned, they will learn on the job, and will probably teach the bare minimum given the enormous effort they will have to make in addition to their work to get up-to-date.
Furthermore, the shift brought about by this educational reform remains fairly minimal compared to everything I have described above. Some of the subjects added are likely to be added to the list of those that are far from essential, such as education in art, culture, economics, etc. One could have imagined courses related to creativity (which concerns much more than the arts), skills related to everyday life (culinary culture, hygiene, nutrition, gardening, social relations, etc.), because I fear that the culture envisaged is that offered to us by literature, television, cinema, museums, tourist guides and folklore, which is nothing more than a 'camembert culture' (a reference to the game *Trivial Pursuit*), far removed from learning about life, and which generally serves only to impress others when one is well versed in it (once again a matter of status and public recognition). As for economics, this consists of transmitting the body of knowledge and rules that govern our capitalist economy (which favour the rich, trap the poor, and are neither moral nor even logical, and ultimately have little to do with managing a household budget, personal savings and suchlike). An interesting video on this subject, about the rebates offered to the rich and the debts created for the poor, *"C'est cher d'être pauvre"* (It's expensive to be poor), a film by François Rola and Philippe Lagnier (2010), is unfortunately no longer online. However, here is the presentation [231] - [see Ref 27]. Or an article on the same subject. [232]
As for core subjects such as mathematics, science, ancient languages, etc., they are still there, albeit with a little less emphasis. Change is coming, but at a snail's pace. In 50 years' time, maybe we will have a completely different education system.

Some claim that education is mainly geared towards preparing us for a professional life rather than for life itself. But that is only half the truth. And even if that were the case, nothing is being done to prepare us or

orient us towards studies and careers that are useful to society. During the pandemic and the closure of most shops and other activities in society, cultural actors such as museums, for example, tried to demand/require that they be allowed to reopen (in Belgium) on the grounds that they too were part of essential services. Similarly, in the cultural and artistic world, many professionals consider their profession to be essential to society, finding it absurd that theatres, cinemas, concert halls, etc. were closed during the pandemic.
So what is it about our education that has led such professions to believe they are so indispensable? This is all the more surprising given that, at present, the existence of the internet, videos, MP3s, e-books, etc. provides almost universal access to a very broad culture that no longer depends on them.

Because, after all, let's come back down to earth: what percentage of the population goes to the theatre, even just once a year? And if the theatre were not subsidised, who would be willing to pay the real price for these performances? We are told that culture makes us evolve and is essential, but what culture are we talking about when we know that only a tiny percentage of the population benefits from it? And that this population, while culturally elitist and financially wealthier, is not necessarily more evolved than the rest of the population.

In what is ready-made entertainment indispensable? What are our most cherished memories and those that have helped us evolve the most? Those where we were active participants in culture, playing, singing, debating, making ourselves socially useful, practising a group activity, travelling, meeting other people and experiencing other ways of life; or those we passively attended while sitting in an armchair? What helps a young person grow more: participating in a youth camp where all the activities are created by the participants themselves, or spending their holidays at a holiday club with beaches, discos, organised tours and the like?

Despite my doubts, I will venture beyond the subject of this chapter, which is related to teaching focused on the rational mind and theory. In a way, once we to step out of the box and certainties that bind us, questions come rushing in and challenge absolutely everything. One trigger leads to another, and our entire mental, moral and psychological makeup is shaken.

So, let us get back to the subject of rationality before moving on to the next chapter.

7. The relative reliability of expert scientific reasoning – a look at global warming

In the media, journalists regularly present us with information, reinforcing it with contributions from leading figures in their field: experts, specialists, university professors, etc. Each media outlet chooses its own sources and draw on them regularly. However, those we refer to as experts do not always provide the best information.

First of all, experts and specialists are just a label, but they still represent a very diverse population. Some are business leaders, others are highly specialised academics, others still have cutting-edge expertise in a particular field, others shine more through their wisdom, intuition, intelligence or creativity, and others provide perspective through their cross-disciplinary knowledge.

Furthermore, it is not uncommon for different experts to present divergent, sometimes contradictory, interpretations of the same reality. And each media outlet will choose the expert whose views best suit its agenda. But more often than not, they will fail to communicate that this is just one interpretation of reality among others. Instead, it will be presented as "the truth". Whereas reality is often made up of different truths, depending on the lens through which it is viewed and interpreted.

On the other hand, a person's declared expertise is not necessarily a guarantee of their competence, even if it is presented to us as such.

Added to this are conflicts of interest, when certain experts are paid by multinationals or associations that directly or indirectly defend financial interests, and therefore the content of their discourse must be aligned with that of those who finance their research.

Then there is also the existence of reasoning biases, conditioning biases and cultural biases. Or the influence that fears, addictions, repression, denial, oversights, distractions, complacency, cowardice and sometimes also unacknowledged hatred and violence can have on discourse. Experts are not immune to these influences either, which colour and sometimes distort their statements.

And if we look at the more sociological and psychological aspects: our human issues, whatever their scale, are far from being objectified. Only certain aspects can be measured, counted and statistically analysed to arrive at partially scientific conclusions. It is impossible to remove the element of personal interpretation from most research involving humans and the systems in which they operate.

In addition, even when we remain within the more exact scientific spheres, if too much attention is focused on the search for objectivity, some people refuse to admit certain realities because they are not sufficiently proven, reliable, referenced, repeatable, etc.

I would like to illustrate this with the example of global warming, where consulting experts is crucial and essential to help us better understand the phenomenon on the one hand, but unfortunately also contributes to a lack of rapid response to mitigate its consequences on the other. This is the biggest pitfall of the scientific approach in this case.

Indeed, until recently (2020-2022), regularly in the news, as disasters multiplied around the world and every day we learned new facts that showed us how much closer we were each time to the abyss, every expert interviewed would comment that the event of the day could not be attributed to global warming: because to do so on the basis of partial evidence, or evidence that was not repeated over time, would lack objectivity. The frequent repetition of this kind of conclusion in the media means that, in the long run, none of the disasters that occur can be directly attributed to global warming – except years later, when statistics can be compiled on the multiplication of such events. This encourages the tendency to believe that global warming is something that is possible and distant, rather than certain and already very real. In this context, leaders on all sides continue to rest on their laurels, and the majority of citizens are also unconcerned in their daily lives. Such an approach ultimately appears highly irresponsible.

What is more, some scientists even go so far as to ignore facts for which no figures are yet available, almost as if they did not exist.

In very concrete terms, for example, the IPCC reports, which are published every few years, are becoming increasingly alarmist. Scientists interviewed confirmed that in 2014 there was not enough data available and that the forecasts could not have been accurate. However, we are currently in exactly the same situation: we still do not have all the data relating to global warming. It might therefore be in our interest to vary the discourse, by being able to envisage that in a few years' time, our knowledge of the issue will be more refined and will show that the situation is much more serious than we are being told today. However, some scientists are already warning of disaster – see the article by Agence Belga published by RTBF*, "La planète bascule vers un désastre irréversible, avertissent les scientifiques" (The planet is heading for irreversible disaster, scientists warn' (2019).* [233]
Even UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has expressed it in these terms: *"Delay means death"*, or more recently*, "The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived."* in order to shake people's consciences. And he is clearly not being heard.

To help you understand the speed at which the planet is warming and the urgent need to change our habits in response, here is a very short animation (24 seconds):
"CarbonBudgetBucket" from the *Global Carbon Project,* which leaves no doubt about the speed of the phenomenon – between 1870 and 2019 – and helps us to better understand the senselessness of not reacting more quickly. [234] - [see Ref 12].

And coming back to the IPCC scientists, they represent 195 countries, meaning 195 different geographical and climatic conditions and 195 different political directions. As such, they can only express the lowest common denominator of the results of their respective studies.

This should not lead us to disregard scientific data or exclude expert opinion, quite the contrary. But it does mean that we must realise that, in many areas, predictions are far from reliable because we are waiting for evidence to make them. This is particularly true when it comes to global warming. The risk that everything we are currently being told is negligible compared to what is about to happen. And that's without taking into account the runaway effects that are already beginning to be measured, which will accumulate and could make the situation even more explosive than we can imagine.

To illustrate this point, there is an article from September 2023, written by Antoine Binamé (in French) on the RTBF website, which, for the first time, suggests that what we are already experiencing now exceeds what has been calculated for the coming decades [235]

What I am trying to express through the example of global warming also applies to other forms of denial, such as those surrounding cigarettes and asbestos, for example. And in the case of global warming, it is a denial of the seriousness and speed at which the process is accelerating.
Experts and scientists are often lagging behind in this area, and therefore listening only to them without the ability to project ourselves into the future is naive and destructive.
Specialists, scientists and experts are often masters of denial, and they assert their views with such confidence, paternalism and even authoritarianism that we quickly feel small and do not dare to respond. But then we are wrong.

I repeat, my point is not to question the quality of scientific research or the competence of experts in general, but I believe it is essential not to base our reasoning solely on what they can tell us.

The limitations of "expertise" are quite palpable in the context of global warming. But this applies to all fields.

The existence of counter-expertise shows how the reliability of expertise is always questionable.
In some cases, it is the personality profile, ideology, experience and competence of the expert that influence the outcome of the expert opinion rather than the rationality they demonstrate. Furthermore, anyone who strays from the beaten track is likely to be labelled a charlatan rather than an expert, even when their skills are proven and their approach remains rational. This is not to deny the existence of abuses and manipulation. But in fields such as psychology and alternative medicine, for example, mistrust is the norm as soon as one strays from academic references or the dogmas of a professional order.

All this shows how slowly science is advancing in many fields. Scientific theories can work in the long term, based on extensive, costly research that is repeated over time. Not to mention that many theories that have been refuted by the majority of scientists for decades end up being approved (or vice versa). Life does not always allow us to wait for scientists to do their work over the long term and eventually agree on a single point of view.

The same is true in the field of economics and finance. Theories on degrowth are largely refuted. Growth, austerity and technology are the only remedies proposed to deal with economic upheavals. And anyone who questions the indecent enrichment of some in the face of the poverty and misery of others is either labelled an extremist or considered marginal and is anything but listened to.

More generally, the idea is not to refute all expert opinions, but to be able to realise that the experts called upon to express their views are almost always there to confirm the beliefs of those who call upon them; and that from one expert to another, it is possible to get them to say everything and its opposite, and that it is necessary to always remain questioning, vigilant and nuanced when faced with expert opinions.

8. Our inability to properly manage our scientific discoveries and inventions

Humanity is currently being called upon to evolve at a rapid pace, within the space of a few decades, compared to the slow pace of evolution that prevailed until the last century, or even the last millennium. If we put into perspective – in relation to history and prehistory – the technological transformation of society that has taken place over the last 200 years or so, with the advent of the industrial era, through to the computer age at the end of the 20th century, and now the era of robotisation, artificial intelligence and biotechnology, we can see that the speed of our evolution is on an upward curve. And if we think a little further, we can see that scientific and technological discoveries have developed spectacularly, but that our psychological and spiritual development has evolved remarkably little, and in some respects has even regressed. And it is precisely this lag that we will have to catch up on very quickly, very, very quickly, if we want to perpetuate our existence. We will probably have to put a stop to the headlong rush towards technology, science and computerisation, ... We have gone much further in their development than we are capable of managing. The idea is not to deny technological progress or to think that 'things were better before'. Rather, it is to realise that the gap between everything we invent and develop at an exceptional rate and our ability to manage and understand it collectively is simply enormous, and that the scale of the excesses this generates is too great and totally destructive.
The conquest of space is a striking example of this. Legal loopholes allow anything and everything. No one owns the Moon, or Mars, or the layers of the Earth's atmosphere. The thousands of satellites sent into space via the Starlink project (42,000) and its competitor Kuiper (more than 3,000) are the most striking example of this. Two companies are thus imposing their rule around the Earth. Regulations will only follow when significant damage is known and recognised by all those who can legislate. In other words, those in charge (of these space projects) have plenty of time to see coming and therefore to happily carry on.

The field of weapons and armaments is another example, this time an extreme one, of what humans are capable of developing... and using. Whether it be the carrying of weapons in the USA, nuclear bombs, pistols or Kalashnikovs, cannons, tanks, "surgical" bombings, anti-personnel mines, cluster bombs, etc. - not to mention the entire chemical and biological arsenal, all the military equipment and personnel, and the colossal budgets dedicated to them - all these weapons were indeed invented by men (note: and probably by no women).

And the worst part is that those who invent them, market them, start wars, develop strategies and send soldiers and entire populations to their deaths or to be maimed, are never the ones who will be affected by weapons or the trauma of war (the exceptions largely confirming the rule).

In short, because they have the material capacity to do so, humans prefer to kill their fellow human beings for their own benefit rather than save them from death for the benefit of all. And there is no point in pointing the finger at certain individuals for this, because we are all involved in these issues. Our countries (Western countries) are regularly involved in armed conflicts, and yet we, the citizens of these countries, continue to live as if nothing were happening.

When military service was compulsory, conscientious objectors were the exception. It is highly likely that this would still be largely the case today.

> **Note on the concept of war**: It should be pointed out that, if we consider violence to be intrinsic to human behaviour in certain circumstances – when poorly managed emotions lead to impulsive, aggressive and destructive acts – wars are anything but impulsive. They are planned. Military elites are trained in strategy. There is even international legislation on this subject. Rationality is therefore invoked to justify the odious: killing innocent people and cannon fodder to satisfy leaders seeking victory. It is therefore one of the worst uses of rationality and science and absolute proof of humanity's inability to manage itself, even though it has been able to create highly developed means of destruction. I do not deny that most armies base their strategies much more on defence than on attack. Nevertheless, neutral countries are not the target of military aggression, nor are they considered threats, and the best defence is not to appear belligerent.

Returning to scientific research and the development of certain technological solutions, I would like to point out that it is not a question of opposing them outright. Because some of them could still help us to save ourselves from disaster. Rather, it is a question of realising that the use of science by humans has so far led us to catastrophe. And that the objectivity so sought after by scientists has done nothing to slow down this destruction. And that, in this context, as long as humans do not evolve sufficiently, we must refrain from going too far, especially in any direction, without the slightest awareness of the consequences. It is not science or technology that should be questioned; it is what we do with them, or rather our inability to use them collectively in a lasting way.

And this concerns everyone, because the research or discovery of one person will always end up being used for unethical purposes by someone else. But above all, in most cases, we do not know the future effects of what we are discovering and inventing today, except for those shown to us by today's experience. However, if these discoveries are directly commercialised and widespread, we cannot then go back and repair the damage. The perfect example of this is plastic. This is especially true because it is the small, seemingly insignificant innovations that multiply by the thousands and millions, and all together create disaster. The responsibility for this drift therefore lies intrinsically with those who direct the initial research if they have no guarantee of the limits that may be imposed on the use of this research.

If we look at everything that has been created from oil, but also at all the consequences this is leading us towards (global warming, massive plastic pollution, dead zones in the oceans, exponential growth in commercial production, depletion of raw materials, wars, etc.), we can see that, in the end, the phenomenal evolutionary leap that this has produced is nothing but an illusion. In this sense, information technology, and now robotisation and artificial intelligence, could only accelerate this process, as long as we do not have the wisdom, on a human scale, to consciously guide research in these areas.

Therefore, until humanity as a whole takes a leap forward in its evolution, scientific research alone will not be able to salvage something. It is necessary to seek answers at another level, without denigrating the potential contributions of scientific knowledge and research. For, nor do I believe that we should become reactionary and wish for a return to the past. The important thing is to remain aware that ethics and the level of consciousness in the use of science fluctuate from one individual to another, and that, no matter how wise some people may be, as long as there are others who are very immature, capable of using the discoveries of the former or seeking to innovate in an immature way themselves, we can only expect disasters. Virtually all scientific and technological advances are affected. This is, for example, the dilemma faced by the scientists who participated in the creation of nuclear weapons without fully understanding the consequences.

And until we are able to move forward together for the good of all, including the good of other living species, we are diminishing our potential to perpetuate ourselves further.

The key to this evolution also lies in abandoning the implicit and harmful power relations that govern our societal organisation at all levels.

Moving away from rationality goes hand in hand with letting go of power relations. In a way, these are two aspects of the same reality.

9. New references to guide our choices

By moving away from the predominance of the Cartesian mind as a reference for our choices, little by little, all our references, all our benchmarks, and ultimately our entire mental context will be led to transform. By moving away from the predominance of the Cartesian mind as a reference for our choices, little by little, all our references, all our benchmarks, and ultimately our entire mental context will be led to transform.

> Note: To avoid any misunderstanding, I repeat that this is not about refusing to use rationality, but rather about no longer considering it as the sole source of thought on which to base our decisions, or as the primary reference among all the other modes of thought available to each of us.

This shift in our perception of context will put us in a position where we will be better able to choose better ideas in each situation that requires them; ideas that will be applicable, that will work, that will lead to lasting success. And in practice, we will be better able to view our failures differently, as opportunities to improve.

However, the shift that needs to be made lies neither in the desire to think differently, nor in the reasoning that accompanies it, but rather in the conception of both the situation and the way in which we evolve within that situation.
It is therefore not so much the search for answers to our questions in the face of life's uncertainties that matters, but rather the framework of thought within which we seek answers. When we change this framework, solutions automatically present themselves to us; they simply become obvious.

Conversely, when we persist in basing our choices almost solely on rationality – through the pursuit of objectivity, through references to science at all costs, through Cartesian logic – and when we therefore disregard our feelings, emotions and intuitions, we simply increase our chances of failure and/or of persisting in our problems. This is actually what we are currently seeing in the fight against global warming and environmental destruction. With all the knock-on effects, the search for new technologies to remedy the catastrophic situation we have created through technology itself, we are only sinking deeper, persisting in warming the climate, producing ever more pollution, depleting resources, and discovering that the consequences of all this are multiplying and worsening.

The same is true of the economic situation when, for example, we market fair trade products that come from southern countries but are superfluous to us in the north; we are only perpetuating imbalance and inequality. Similarly, when we get involved in sustainable fashion, we use sustainable production to create something ephemeral, and in doing so, we remain stuck in the logic of the past. When associations such as #BlackLivesmatter ask multinationals to stop profiting from hatred (by stopping advertising on social media), they continue to advocate profit, which in itself produces all kinds of abuses: inequality, injustice, poverty, and also hatred. When we produce electric cars to do away with fossil fuels, but run them on electricity from nuclear or coal-fired power stations, we are simply shifting the problem, because the goal is not the environment, but to persist in making a profit, while trying to make it appear more lasting.

However, putting the logic of our reasoning second remains something that shocks our society.

It is necessary to experiment with it in order to better understand its effectiveness, and therefore to agree to try the experiment of operating differently, even if we do not yet believe in it.

The main key to this shift in attitude is to understand that consistency, efficiency, durability, success and recognition of our choices are much more likely when we manage to live according to our hearts rather than our heads. People who follow their hearts generally have a much smoother life, with far fewer worries, etc. Rationality must be at the service of the heart.

Here is what Satish Kumar says about this in his book *"Your are therefore I am - A declaration of dependance"* (2002), published by Bloomsbury [236] [See Ref 1].

> *"I have always considered rationalism to be a form of intellectual violence. This violence is all the more brutal because it is inherent in its very nature: as soon as it is at work, rationalism cuts, separates, divides and isolates. Rationality has its place in our lives, of course, but society should not put it on a pedestal. Like the yin and yang of Taoism, the heart and reason must balance each other, not confront each other. If tempered by our feelings and intuitions, rationalism can contribute to the emergence of a culture based on non-violence, interdependence and compassion. If it reigns supreme, it leads straight to violence."* [237] -

Rational logic is to mental reasoning what power relations are to human relations. And these two aspects combine perfectly in our Western mindset. Power relations must therefore also be questioned.

C) LETTING GO OF THE BALANCE OF POWER

1. Introduction

The evolutionary leap that will be necessary to revolutionise our society can only come from each and every little pawn that we are. While politics, the media and certain technologies may play a role, they will not be the source of this change, but merely the consequence of a mass transformation at the individual level. And the power of money will lose its place. This transformation is already underway. Every person who takes a step forward in their own evolution de facto brings about change around them – this aspect will be developed in the last section.

And in order to make the right choices towards the right alternatives, ones that are not deceptive, crutches on wooden legs, new means but equivalent to those that led us to disaster, we will have to truly shift our perspective in all our conceptions of reality.

As we have seen in previous chapters, in order to make evolve our mentalities, we will need to make explicit many elements that are currently still masked (as well as in the functioning of society and in our individual values and behaviours). We will need to abandon denial – our refusal to see and accept the situation as it is – but also our own complacency or cowardice in the face of this situation. And we will have to move away from the tendency to rely solely on Cartesian reasoning.

But the most important aspect we will need to examine is the balance of power that drives our society at all levels: between nations as well as between individuals, and at all levels in between.

This is the crucial point of a deep move in mentality, which opens the door to a genuine capacity for altruism, empathy and cooperation; these are then no longer wishful thinking, but reveal themselves to be our true nature. Once we understand the essential need to choose this direction, the practical work

begins, which will take place over the longer term and will enable us to avoid, at the slightest threat or frustration, returning to our old patterns, our old demons, so to speak.

This learning process can likewise only be initiated at the individual level before it can be experienced on a larger scale. It is a rather slow and demanding task. However, it is made easier when our progress is shared by our peers. This allows us to trust that others are operating in the same way. When groups manage to operate in this way, and there are already some that do, then progress is rapid.

Therefore, the more people who operate outside the realm of power relations, the easier and faster we will achieve a general evolution of mentalities.

The new structure of society towards which this is leading us is like the World Wibe Web and a pan balance scale. And we will move away from the current pyramid structure that shapes our society in so many areas and is doomed to collapse like a house of cards.
The choice of the image of a house of cards is not anodyne.
In a house of cards, in order to keep the cards standing and build the structure, it is necessary to place them in opposition to each other. Each card is held upright by the weight of the card opposite it, while resting on the cards below. And these oppositions, superimposed on one another, allow the house to be built. In this sense, when we put all our weight on the card we are opposing, we keep it upright. Psychologically, it is the same: opposition maintains what is. Open conflicts maintain discord in a way. Opposition even often has the opposite effect to that intended; in the sense that the more we oppose a group, a person, or an ideology in society, the more successful it becomes.
This principle also applies when opposition is almost non-existent, when the dominated, on the one hand, claim in their discourse to reject the domination to which they are subjected, while on the other hand, they accept in practice to submit to the dominant. We have seen this in the example of television viewers who rebel against the policy of the director of the channel they watch but who continue to watch the programmes offered by that channel. Or when social network users agree to remain members even though they do not agree with the management policy of those same networks, and ask others (multinationals) to exert pressure to get their way (see the paragraphs that mention this aspect). Without realising it, we are all capable of adopting this kind of complacent attitude on a daily basis. It is therefore not very difficult for those in power to persevere in their own attitude, often without even being truly aware of the dominant aspect of their behaviour.

And in many situations, it is even the submissive behaviour itself that is at the root of the power imbalance: a service rendered on a recurring basis may end up being taken for granted by the person who benefits from it. This is particularly evident in the division of household tasks between cohabitants, in couples or in certain families. And of course, it is found in all professional environments. Those who get into the habit of doing a little more will quickly see others offload these tasks onto them. And no matter how much they complain about this injustice, once the step has been taken, it will be very difficult to break free.

And in most power relationships, which are often unequal, the situation persists over time because each of the actors involved agrees to continue playing their role. The dominant keeps the dominated under their thumb, and the dominated actively participates in their domination, simply by agreeing to submit. In this sense, not all power relationships are dictatorial.

In a way, when someone abuses their power and tries to dominate us unduly, if we are not stuck in the situation and therefore forced to endure this unjust or undue power, we have a responsibility and even a duty to leave that situation. And to return to the image of the card house: if we remove our pawns from the game, our card from the game, we cause the card facing us to subside.

It is usually our fears about what is at stake that prevent us from setting our limits or feeling free, because we are afraid of losing a loved one, a friend, our job, or failing at school or in a project. However, if our interlocutor or partner is fair, they will accept our new attitude and respect us. And if they do not, perhaps our relationship or project needs to be re-evaluated. It is only in cases where we do not have the freedom to re-evaluate that we have no choice but to submit. But as adults, we have much more freedom in our choices than we imagine, and we can acquire certain ways of relating and communicating that allow us to avoid situations of domination and submission through negotiation.

In situations where negotiation is not possible or successful in avoiding power struggles, if we unilaterally leave the power struggle by withdrawing our card from the game, we then exercise a different kind of power, but one that is above that of domination.
If we manage to leave the game regularly to avoid unhealthy power games, we then learn to choose the games we enter more wisely.

And this can happen at all levels, including political games and between nations.
As citizens in a democracy, our freedom is much greater than in our couple, our families, our friendships or our work. And it is not a question of rebelling against authority or boycotting anything. It is about choosing to focus on the things that work well, without seeking to confront those that do not work properly. Because the power of the alternative is not that of power relations, it is that of evolution, that of the heart, that of creativity and that of collective intelligence. Each withdrawal of our destructive social system and replaced with a commitment to constructive alternatives, is a another step towards avoiding collapse and chaos, because alternatives can take over from everything that is destined to disappear.

> Note: It should be clarified that abandoning the balance of power does not mean moving towards anarchy. It is not a question of rejecting authority, hierarchy and power, but of gradually, and in line with an evolution of mentalities, moving away from them and/or replacing them with other systems of communication and relationships that are closer to those of networks, consensus, autonomy, participatory democracy, collective intelligence and solidarity.

2. The balance of power

a - What does the balance of power consist of?

But first, let's start by explaining what we mean by this expression.
The balance of power consists of creating, attempting to create, or maintaining, in an individual or collective relationship, a difference in status between the protagonists. Whether this is due to age, skin colour, gender, culture, religion, wealth, skill, ability, knowledge, or simply physical strength, the balance of power creates competition or generates strength in some and submission in others.

Power dynamics always involve at least two people. And each person plays a role.

There are only three ways to avoid the power dynamic and thus avoid participating in it: not engaging in it, dissolving it, or leaving the situation.

To return to the metaphor of the house of cards, this means keeping the cards flat, laying down one of the two cards, or removing one of the two cards from the deck.

However beware, there are roundabout ways of trying to thwart a power struggle which, on the contrary, reverse it in a more underhand way.
Indeed, when we have no recourse to exert sufficient force in the face of domineering behaviour, if we do not leave the situation or refuse to cooperate with it, and do not want to remain powerless and submissive,

there are less frank but no more constructive alternatives: cowardice, manipulation, victimisation, or even somatisation. These are also ways of remaining in the power struggle, even if they are rarely successful.

b - Letting go of the balance of power

Letting go of the balance of power is, above all, a state of mind, a mentality that allows us, in our relationships and behaviour, to stop positioning ourselves in relation to others by trying to impose our will: either directly, as a competitor, authoritarian, predator or dominant figure; or indirectly, as an abuser or manipulator. Or, conversely, to stop allowing ourselves to be abused through submission and powerlessness, or even cowardice, complicity or complacency: by setting boundaries or leaving the situation.

At the same time, this allows us to stop measuring ourselves, comparing ourselves to others, judging others, and thereby stop adapting to the judgements of others or to the idea we have of how others judge us.

This reduces submission and the use of coercion. Hierarchy then takes on a different face. This attitude, freed from all power in the relationship (seeking control over others or submitting to the control of others), can then be combined with rationality and creativity to achieve projects, overcome obstacles or resolve disagreements, in groups and populations, depending on the abilities and willingness of the actors involved.

We are all capable of acting outside power relations from time to time. But learning to let go of power relations means trying to do so more and more often, especially in situations where we were previously unable to conceive of functioning outside power games and frameworks of obedience or rebellion.

When this attitude is used, then, and only then, does a whole range of other skills become truly accessible: cooperation, intuition, creativity, empathy, altruism, collective intelligence, etc. In other words, it can be summed up as functioning with the heart. In a way, in our culture, operating within the balance of power is the predominant attitude, while the attitude of the heart is secondary and is only used where one can afford to "let down one's guard". The power struggle is a direct legacy of our animal condition: the struggle for survival. Our evolution can lead us to move beyond this stage.

c - We operate within power relations as naturally as we breathe

Letting go of power dynamics brings more freedom in our choices and behaviours, resulting in the flourishing of diversity, lasting access to equity and solidarity, greater humility, and the possibility of establishing solid and lasting trust in all social interactions and relationships. And this step is so fundamental that taking it means entering another world.

I truly believe that this aspect is the cornerstone, the centre of gravity, for transformations at all levels to bear real fruit. And it is no mean feat to achieve this. Power relations are still to our psychology what the ambient air is to our space: invisible and yet omnipresent.

As long as we are unable to look at reality outside of these patterns of functioning, it is almost impossible to understand that they are all, almost always, inadequate and harmful.

The consciousness of all these processes is particularly poor. The French expression "rapport de force" has no real synonym in English. Conversely, there are many expressions close to this concept: balance of power, power struggle, power game, power relationships, power dynamics.

And in both languages, there are many words that imply its presence, such as violence, struggle, conflict, opposition, domination, etc.
It is also quite surprising that in other languages such as Spanish and English, there is no expression that corresponds exactly to the French expression (similar in Italian: rapporto di forza). In English, we talk about the "*balance* of power" or "power relationship", which is more akin to equilibrium and distances itself from the more conflictual, aggressive or violent aspect. And in Spanish, we talk about *"relación de fuerza" (power relationship)*, where again, by talking about a relationship, we remove the conflictual, aggressive or violent aspect of the expression.
However, our language shapes our culture, or conversely, culture is imbued with the concepts that language allows.

Our entire society is based on power relations. However, true human riches, at humanity's current stage of evolution, consists in consciously managing to leave this state of mind behind, that is to say, through a process of learning, by questioning all our behaviours, attitudes and thoughts, so that for each of them we can choose the alternative path, that of empathy.

When we operate on the basis of empathy, our minds gain access to new ways of thinking, our capacity for choice expands, our attitudes evolve, and this enables us to become part of the solution, to convey a different way of being in the world. And this shift takes place not only at the level of our mentality, but also at the level of our behaviour and in the way we communicate, which will impact everyone around us and perhaps much more. This impact will not be purely intentional, but above all natural. And that is the whole point of this work on ourselves, as we will see later.

d - The implications of the balance of power, or absence thereof

To avoid speaking in vague terms, let us try to understand what lies behind behaviours influenced by power relations.

There are two modes of operation, or rather two tendencies. The first is relatively stable and follows a pattern of domination by some and submission by others.
In this case, it is an unequal relationship that is most often chosen by some and endured by others. The main examples are male domination and the domination of the rich over the poor. These two forms of domination take every possible and imaginable form and are, to this day, implicitly accepted by almost everyone, but this is unlikely to continue for much longer, as we are reaching a stage where we have a better understanding of each person's role and its consequences.

Other power relations of domination and submission exist more explicitly in families, in the education system in general, and in all systems that operate with a hierarchy: businesses, administrations, armies, political and judicial systems, etc. These are unequal relationships where, on one side, there is power and imposition, and on the other, submission, punishment, or even reward. In principle, these power relations are healthy and function more or less successfully, depending on the circumstances. However, those who hold power can easily be led to abuse it, which allows for all the abuses we are familiar with. In many cases, laws or regulations exist to protect against these possible abuses and excesses in explicit power relations.

There are two powers that operate at the extreme end of the power balance in an explicit and recognised manner: military power and judicial power. The former demands unwavering discipline from soldiers, even to the point of paying with their lives. The latter works to enforce the laws. These laws are coercive; those who break them pay with money or with their person or their freedom, sometimes through violence. By definition, every trial involves a verbal battle between lawyers.

The other trend in power relations is one where the forces are fairly comparable. This can be observed between partners: in couples, between siblings, sometimes between friends, between colleagues, between companies, between political parties, between nations, etc. Generally, partners do not operate continuously according to power games. Depending on the type of relationship, whether it is more or less healthy, it may be possible to resolve certain issues in a context characterised more by cooperation, communication, respect, empathy, etc. However, the greater the tension, the more likely each party is to engage in impulsive behaviour, which by its very nature reduces the ability to listen and empathise and tends to lead to attempts to "impose" one's opinion, "defend" one's cause as a priority in a direct or insidious manner, or, conversely, to give up trying to do so. Our education, experience and willpower can reduce or increase our propensity to resolve disputes in this way.

And when power fluctuates in a power struggle, we are constantly led to measure ourselves against our opponent, to compete.

If the resolution of disagreements or conflicts between partners involves the balance of power, most of them are likely to resurface at some point. For it only takes for the balance of power to be reversed for one reason or another, or simply because the one who has the power to impose his solution on others loses that power, for the problem to resurface even more strongly. The balance of power, in this case, requires a great deal of energy, since maintaining it involves keeping up the pressure, control or coercion of the one who exercises it over the one who suffers it.

The presence of balance of power can also involve the use of lies, deception, fraud, betrayal and manipulation. For when one does not possess physical strength, strength in numbers, authority or charisma, and refuses to submit, power will be exercised through strategy, in a hidden, insidious and unfair manner. And then all kinds of scheming become possible.

When we begin to overcome disagreements and conflicts by means other than power relations – to my knowledge, there are no shortcuts in this area – it then becomes possible to start negotiating, seeking consensus, using empathy, non-violence, mediation, patience, creativity, intuition, and probably other avenues... Only then will new solutions become available to us. And once in place, these will no longer require us to maintain a power struggle. The problem will then be solved for good, and often the relationship with the other party will have improved thanks to the discovery of a solution that satisfies everyone and raises the level of trust between the two parties. This is probably what characterises the strongest couples: the ability to overcome obstacles outside the power struggle, which then strengthens the bond.

Not only will the problem be resolved in a lasting way, but it will influence those who have resolved it in their future experiences, serving as an example and spreading around them. For, this will have a contagious effect, which certain factors will stimulate and accelerate in a surprising way (see the chapter on these factors of influence for change). And this contagion effect will then take place on a large scale, as quickly as a fashion trend, but in a lasting way. Not only because the threat of a reversal of the situation will have disappeared (since the balance of power will no longer intervene), but also because the level of consciousness will have risen to a higher level.

And in the longer term, on a global scale, it would be possible to imagine reaching a stage where we would be able to disarm, let go of borders, let go of competition, drastically reduce the workload of the courts, and surely many other advances. This may seem distant or totally utopian, and yet we may not be so far away. Some companies, schools, families and organisations are already operating in this way or are trying to move towards it.

However, initially, moving away from balance of power is not a matter of decision but a long learning process. For, successfully resolving our differences without resorting to power games does not

necessarily guarantee that we will be able to do so in future situations. Relapses are common. Our automatic responses, our conditioning, our emotions and impulses will, in every situation, divert our choices and bring power struggles back through the back door. Learning to overcome this requires being present, much more present, in order to be conscious of our thoughts and emotions and manage them, so that we can choose those that move us forward and reject those that bring us back to our old ways of functioning.

However, when we work with people who are sufficiently advanced in this learning process, these setbacks become the exception. And it is in this context that, when a sufficient number of people have completed this long and difficult initiation, a large-scale shift will occur where everyone will benefit from the experience of some.

Yet, we must not delude ourselves. Learning to abandon the balance of power, when the majority of individuals remain addicted to them, encourages us to fall back into our old patterns. This is why this initiation is extremely slow for the first people to adopt it. But conversely, this allows us to anticipate that the more these behaviours spread, the faster the shift in mentality will occur – in an upward spiral – because there will be fewer and fewer opportunities to fall back into our old ways. And from then on, everyone will be able to start letting go of their defensive, distrustful or withdrawn attitudes. It is difficult to imagine what could be achieved in a very short space of time.

e - Violence is never far from power relations, and neither is non-violence.

Violence is never far from power relations. Most often, it is expressed indirectly, not only in the form of aggressiveness and physical force, but also through disrespect for others, through presenting them with a fait accompli, and through all forms of manipulation, psychological pressure, blackmail, etc.

And this usually happens from unconscious to unconscious.

As for non-violence, as it is understood in the West, it is a concept that is still too often imbued with violence, in most situations where it is a question of "opposing" violence, "fighting", "resisting" in order to "win the day", but above all of using a power struggle.
This is expressed very clearly, for example, in the following quote:

According to François Vaillant's article, *"Non-violence, a force for the 21st century" (2013)*:

> *"The originality of non-violence lies in thwarting repression by breaking the cycle of violence. The methods of non-violent action are aimed at creating a balance of power that compels the opponent to engage in dialogue, i.e. to negotiate."* [238]

The words are explicit: "thwarting" (which here is not far from a form of manipulation), "breaking", "create a balance of power", "force".
The end is beautiful. The means are not as beautiful as one would like to let appear.

In any case, this is how non-violence is widely viewed in the West. And, in this sense, while it is a new and alternative way of resolving conflicts, it retains the same references as those of past problems, namely: continuing to operate with the balance of power. And in this sense, while the way of thinking is slightly different, it is not different enough to change the paradigm. I think Gandhi and Martin Luther King conceived of non-violence differently, although I am not certain.

Non-violence, as described above, is often a half-solution, or in any case, it involves almost as much violence as it combats. Even if it does not practise this violence on a physical level, it practises it indirectly on a psychological level. This is because the aim of non-violent action, through resistance without physical

combat and without destruction, is nevertheless to oppose and stimulate, or even provoke, violence from those whose decisions we want to change. It is therefore a more insidious form of violence, which, under the guise of high ethical standards and constructive, often highly effective objectives, nevertheless consists of provoking those we wish to fight into fighting back, in order to indirectly cover them with guilt, shame or failure by the very fact that they alone are using physical violence.

This non-violence is generally practised with a relatively belligerent mental attitude, with a great deal of hostility, in a spirit of conflict. Whereas true non-violence can only be practised with the heart. To truly understand non-violence – that of the heart – I recommend reading the book (already mentioned) *"Your are therefore I am - A declaration of dependance"* (2002), by Satish Kumar, published by Bloomsbury [239] – [see Ref 1]. In this book, the author writes autobiographically about the Jain religion (in the first part of the book), which offers a conception of non-violence in its purest form.

The difficulty with non-violence in its essence and that which is most often practised is that, first of all, they are often confused. But also that those who practise a form of non-violence that incites violence often claim to be acting from the heart, whereas when one attempts to incite violence in an adversary, one cannot be in a state of mind guided by the heart.

From the same document cited above: François Vaillant's article, *"Non-violence, a force for the 21st century" (2013)*:

> *"The aim of non-violent conflict resolution is not to humiliate the opponent but to eliminate the injustice being perpetrated. At the end of a conflict that is resolved non-violently, there is indeed a winner and a loser, but there is neither victor nor vanquished, because the gain in humanity is shared between all."* [240]

This is yet another situation that demonstrates the importance of the balance of power in this so called non-violence. True non-violence, in my opinion, seeks neither to win nor to cause others to lose. First and foremost, it accepts defeat in certain cases. It is used to set limits where possible. And if not, it is used for the sake of consistency and, above all, for the sake of love.

If we want to move forward, to evolve in a lasting and even definitive way, i.e. in a way that makes it almost impossible to go back, we need to learn to act on a different level from that of violence, non-violence, resistance and balance of power.

This does not exclude these approaches, because extreme cases and imminent disasters – which are not exceptional – require immediate action, which rarely allows violence to be completely avoided. But the further we evolve in another direction, the rarer these extreme cases will become, until they no longer occur. Hence the importance of acting at the level of the foundations of our mental and emotional functioning.

f - How power relations permeate all our conceptions

i The mentality based on the balance of power

In the framework of explicit and recognised power relations in relationships such as: the boss with his employee, the parent or teacher with the child, the police officer, the judge or the elected representative with the citizen; very often, clear rules define the powers of the former and the rights and duties of the latter. Sometimes there are also rules that provide for a countervailing power to prevent abuses. If these power relations are healthy, they are generally well accepted and allow for cordial relationships and the effective achievement of objectives.

And while these power relations remain necessary in certain circumstances, such as in education in particular, they are much less so than one might imagine. Even in the workplace, when a skill must be exercised and applied in the field, this does not require that the resulting power be exercised permanently or significantly. And there are plenty of situations where consensus and democracy can replace it or be used in parallel. This can be seen, for example, in democratic companies or in participatory democracy.

But it is other types of power relations that we will focus on. Because, unfortunately, in our culture, there are many others that form the basis of our mental constructs and appear in almost all relationships, including our friendships and romantic relationships, as well as in our leisure activities, such as competitive sports or games involving a winner – which are the most common types of games.

And money is one of the major ingredients that creates, promotes and maintains all kinds of power relations. With money, you can buy anything, even power.

In reality, most power relationships are not identified as such and therefore play out unconsciously through behaviours, attitudes and implicit messages.

This is the case for male domination (of which we are only just beginning to discover the omnipresent implicit issues), as well as for racism, homophobia, but also in many situations of mistreatment, manipulation, harassment, blackmail, etc.; as well as in many of our everyday behaviours.

We can see it, for example, in driving behaviour through honking horns, cutting people off, swearing and giving the finger while driving, etc. We can also see it when someone jumps the queue. Or in the relationship between shopkeepers and customers, where money is used as a means of pressure to impose requirements, assert status, etc. Or simply in the way we present ourselves, when we measure each other by our clothes, the brand we wear, the brand of our accessories, our car, our mobile phone, etc. The tendency to judge is a major ingredient in a power-based mentality, as is the tendency to feel judged without necessarily being so, or to overdo behaviours in order to attract kindness and recognition and to avoid any conflictual or abusive behaviour.

Even when we want to operate on the basis of consensus, equality, respect, justice and goodwill, we are still deeply conditioned to do the opposite most of the time, by elbowing our way in, showing off, seeking to be right, judging, being defensive, being aggressive when we don't understand, denouncing, demanding/requiring, forcing, presenting with a fait accompli, pressuring, mocking, deceiving, betraying, corrupting... or, conversely, submitting to all of this.

In a way, even though we are adults, without admitting it to ourselves, we still often behave like children. And as long as we are not conscious of this, as long as we persist in denying it, we can only continue down this path.

In this context, wealth and the inequalities it creates are both the source and consequence of the persistence of (harmful) power relations in our society. In more egalitarian societies, where wealth is much less coveted, power relations are much less prevalent. A society where power relations were minimal would see the pursuit of material wealth disappear.

ii Our inability to envisage conflicts outside the power struggle

The conflicts: this is the epicentre where most power struggles play out. All social life involves disagreements and conflicting interests. For although all humans have similar needs, our different paths inevitably lead us to want to fulfil them in our own way. Our choices, our limitations, our opinions will inevitably, sooner or later, be confronted by those who do not share them.

And in our society, we almost systematically resolve all our conflicts within the framework of power struggles through:
- domination (war, authority, manipulation, pressure, betrayal, presenting a fait accompli),
- escape (denial, distancing, irresponsibility, cowardice),
- or submission (powerlessness, silence, somatisation, inertia, trauma, etc.).
In reality, we have simply never really learned to resolve our conflicts on other grounds. When we do not understand the person we are talking to and their interests differ from ours, we simply judge them. Judgement is, more often than not, a sign of lack of understanding or an inability to listen. Because when we take the trouble to explain ourselves and listen to the other person with our ears wide open, that is, with genuine empathy, with the aim not of defending "our" own interests, but of defending the interests of all parties, we enter into a different mode of relationship. It is then that negotiation, consensus, creativity, sharing, respect, self-giving and acceptance are the winners in the process, generating satisfaction for all parties, leading to a long-term resolution of the disagreement, while allowing the relationship and trust between the protagonists to improve.

iii A society of dominators and dominated: power relations are everywhere

Everything in our society is built around the dominant and the dominated, the strongest and the weakest, the wealthiest and the poorest, the experts and specialists and those with little education, or even between those who hold authority and those who have no choice but to submit. And we each live, on the surface – on one side or the other – almost as if nothing were wrong, either exercising domination or suffering it, as if it were something hereditary or deserved. And depending on the roles we play, depending on our relationships and activities, we can be dominant on one side and submissive on the other. Submissive to the boss, dominant to the spouse, or vice versa, or submissive to the spouse, authoritarian to the children. Almost all scenarios are possible, with some people being dominant everywhere and others submissive in all situations. Depending on our upbringing, environment, character and gender, we will more easily fall into one category or the other.

Wherever things get out of hand, there are people who abuse their power to grant themselves privileges or harm others or the environment, and others who suffer or are complacently participate in order to reap some personal benefits.

It is the very fact that all our interactions operate within the framework of power relations that makes this possible.

And, it should be remembered, power relations that have not been predefined are mainly played out away from the spotlight. People who abuse power often operate implicitly, mainly unconsciously or semi-consciously. This allows them to avoid having to justify themselves and reduces the possibility that those who suffer abuse will be able to expose them. Male domination is fundamentally based on the implicit, and the issue of consent in sexual relationships is the most representative example of this.

This framework traps us by preventing us from recognising our mistakes and, therefore, from correcting them. In an authoritarian mentality, acknowledging a mistake means losing power or, at the very least, running too great a risk of seeing it weaken or disappear. And in a situation of submission, acknowledging a mistake leads de facto to punishment, blame or rejection. As a result, mistakes are almost never communicated by those who make them and are often even denied. Those in power are able to shift the blame onto others, either through simple manipulation in order to retain more power, or through projection (an unconscious psychological tendency to blame others for our own mistakes). Consequently, all of this perpetuates these dysfunctions.

And yet, when we manage to leave the realm of power games behind, humility and the recognition of our mistakes become a strength. Because, on the one hand, they allow us to be fair and consistent, but above all reliable towards others. But also because it is the only way we have to truly progress. A mistake that is denied simply prevents us from learning how to overcome it. Therefore, a society governed by power relations is, almost by its very nature, a society that has stalled in its evolution.

It should be noted that it is not even necessary to be the author of a mistake for abuse to occur, or even sometimes to run rampant in a couple or a group. Those who have experienced harassment, bashing, mobbing, ostracism, racism, sexism, manipulation, and abuse know this all too well: all it takes is vulnerability to become the punching bag. Vulnerability is not inherently a weakness, but it can be used by others to weaken those who show signs of it. It can be compared to showing up unarmed in a group where everyone else is armed. The vulnerable person thus becomes the perfect target for all power struggles and abuses.

And vulnerability can manifest itself in a thousand ways, mainly through difference: culture, religion, physical appearance, disability, illness, sometimes even size, gender, language (or even accent), differences in lifestyle choices: celibacy, LGBT+ lifestyle choices, cultural or political interests that differ from those of the group, naivety, slow comprehension or action. All it takes is for a person's particularity to slightly disturb another, more influential member of the group for them to be implicitly designated as the weak link in the group. Anyone who does not conform to the group will be considered vulnerable and therefore vulnerable to attack if power relations are significant within that group. And this aspect is probably even more palpable among men who are educated in competition, where one must always measure oneself against others.

When I used the examples of the Weinstein affair (see the relevant page) and the *#MeToo* movement (see the relevant page) earlier in the text, it was not entirely innocent. These examples are not only representative of how mentalities can evolve in a relatively short period of time and the consequences this has for our society. But they are also quite representative of the issue of male domination over women at all levels of society and in all possible and imaginable forms. I could also have chosen the theme that encompasses racism, colonialism and slavery. These are the same concepts of power relations where one population dominates another.
However, domination by the rich encompasses almost all other areas of domination. And as such, male domination and domination by the rich have a lot to do with each other, because those who dominate, in the vast majority of cases, belong to both groups (male and rich), just as they are predominantly "white" and Western and often university educated. This is not about labelling all men and all rich people (all white people, all academics and all Westerners) as problematic, but about questioning what it is in each of us that makes us part of a system that has put them/us in this position. Pointing the finger at certain people in particular may not be necessary. We are all concerned. Whether we are part of the dominant or the dominated, we are all called upon to abandon certain patterns of behaviour that have become obsolete.
If you are interested in this topic, I invite you to watch the video (already mentioned in the first part) of the TEDx talk by Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, occupational and organisational psychologist: *"Why do so many incompetent men become leaders?"* (2019) [241] - [see Ref 9].

Power dynamics intrude absolutely everywhere, even in love. For example, in heterosexual couples, although this is beginning to change, it is rare for the man to be younger, shorter, less educated, less intelligent, or to have a less prestigious job than the woman (the nurse who marries the doctor, the boss who marries his secretary or assistant; are common examples). And when there is a reversal of power in a couple, it is considered that the woman "wears the trousers", as a kind of anomaly, according to popular belief, demonstrating the weakness of the man and the inelegance of the woman.

Not being submissive or abusive, and maintaining balance in the long term, is extremely complicated for human beings today, so deeply ingrained is this mentality and so dependent are we still on our defensive reflexes and dominant impulses.

We are experiencing a paradigm shift, where we are called upon to become conscious that most of the dysfunctions in our society are interrelated, and all of them have only been able to develop within the framework of a balance of power.

Getting to know ourselves better, recognising our tendencies, acknowledging the fears that underlie them, and learning to live with them without letting them dictate our behaviour is the path we must take to make our future possible and distance ourselves from all the nightmares we have created on a global scale.

But let us continue to clear the ground before talking about and explaining how to move away from the balance of power and avoid its consequences.

iv Submission

When we talk about power relations, we tend to focus on those in positions of dominance, often overlooking the behaviour that underpins it: submission.
Stopping submissive behaviour is actually even more important than abandoning dominant behaviour because, in most cases, which are mostly details, it is submission that holds the house of cards together. In the sense that, to build a house of cards, it is essential to pit the cards against each other. And if one of the two cards does not play its role, the other card cannot play its role and also falls. For there to be a dominant, there must be a dominated. And when the dominated adopts a new attitude, the dominant can no longer exercise their power in the same way.
However, when the dominated rebels, they are only attempting to overthrow power, rebellion being merely a warlike response whose force is not sufficient to topple authority or the stronger party. Breaking free from submission therefore has nothing to do with rebellion.

Submission does not consist solely of abdicating our power or obeying authority or domination. There are, of course, situations where it is impossible to do otherwise. The following does absolutely not apply to situations of violence (physical, verbal, but also psychological), mistreatment, injustice, etc. But in many more cases than we think, we submit without any real constraint, even if this choice is not truly conscious. And this is where new attitudes can take hold, by becoming conscious of our daily choices, on a case-by-case basis.

To return t once again o the example of male domination, I believe that abuses will only disappear if the woman becomes conscious of her power in the scenario, which will enable her to rewrite it without resorting to rebellion or a reversal of the balance of power that would make her dominant. Because, given the above, as long as women ask or require that men behave differently, they will not get it, or only so slowly.

Firstly, because from the men's point of view, the scenario as it stands suits them perfectly (at least on the surface, and that is what they see). Moreover, as they are largely unconscious of the domineering aspect of their behaviour, which they exercise in microscopic ways but everywhere, they minimise its impact. They have absolutely no idea of the scale of the problem and wonder why people are getting hung up on details that they consider unimportant.
And so they can only conceive of defending their privileges tooth and nail, but in the least explicit way possible.

Therefore, as long as women continue to participate in these power games by allowing themselves to be subjugated, nothing can change (I repeat, I am not talking here about extreme cases, even though they are very numerous).

And it is essential to take into account the fact that someone who suffers domination and succeed to free themselves from it can then become dominant. In this context, it is necessary for our conscience to lead us to refuse to activate this dominant facet, in order to be able to move towards fairness, equality, empathy and the heart.

This is because, in a couple, women have other assets at their disposal to make the situation more equitable. We can imagine the communication and relationship between two partners as a scarf, with each holding one end – each having a hold on their end of the scarf, but not directly on their partner. The woman in the couple holds one end of the scarf in her hands, and that end can initiate and bring about change in the relationship. The man, at the other end of the relationship, holds nothing but the other end of the scarf. This gives the woman a certain amount of freedom, which she is generally unaware of.

All too often, women present themselves to men as secondary characters, and primarily as sexual objects. (And this is without ignoring the fact that many men consider them as such even when they do not present themselves in this way). Women do not do this consciously, because they have been implicitly educated and conditioned to act in this way. But with this type of behaviour, they are simply teaching men to continue to view them as such, reinforcing their implicit education, which also points in this direction. These are things that take root over the long term. We are all conditioned in this mentality, but it is up to women to be the first to break free from it. What's more, this mentality has become much more entrenched over the last thirty years.

Whereas in the 1970s, Western youth had arrived at unisex fashion, for example, and had erased many of the gender differences that were not related to gender, but rather to the image that culture had instilled in us; today, while men's fashion has hardly evolved, women's fashion until recently confined women to clothing and accessories that transformed them into sex objects. It is not the harmony of colours, the elegance of the designs, or the beauty of the clothing that sells, but rather anything that will highlight a woman's sexual curves.
Similarly, there is now a feminised way of speaking in many circles, which is completely unnatural and plays exactly the same role (selfies of women with duck faces are quite typical of this trend). Submitting to such dictates of fashion and behaviour means voluntarily submitting to male domination, without necessarily being conscious of the consequences.

Women often accept situations that they should refuse. But also, in couples, it happens much more often than we think that women themselves generate situations that favour their partner's power of domination. And I am not saying that they are guilty of this. They are simply playing the role they have been taught to play, but they can learn to break out of it, because it is not the man who will decide to break out of the complementary role he plays in this scenario. And one of the two will have to initiate change at this level.

Take, for example, the division of household chores within a couple. Surveys show that in the early years of a relationship, the division of labour is relatively equitable, but over time an imbalance sets in, and women take on a greater share of the work.
Having experienced this myself and observed it repeatedly around me, I believe that women often facilitate these conditions themselves, and men simply exploit them in accordance with their own conditioning and upbringing.

Before women entered the paid workforce, it was considered obvious that they would take care of the household and raise the children. When they entered the labour market, it should have been natural for these conditions to be reviewed in order to share the tasks. But this was clearly not in the interests of

men, who suddenly found themselves jointly responsible for the household and education, which they had not had to take on until then. It is therefore quite logical that they were not very cooperative at first, especially as their education had not prepared them for this.

But very often, what also happens in couples is that the woman who works will want (unconsciously) to retain control over the running of the home by designating the man more as an assistant than as a partner. When a woman tells me that she is very happy in her relationship because her man 'helps' her with the housework, I understand that there is no equal place for him in the household, as she is the one in charge. It is therefore not surprising that, over time, the man ends up shirking those tasks. And there are a thousand ways to shirk them. He can stay late at work or bring work home with him. He can get involved in lots of activities that prevent him from spending the necessary time at home doing housework. One can also allow oneself not to do these tasks, or to do them casually, or even completely ineffectively. And many men excel at all of these options. Very often, women push them into it without realising, quite unintentionally, and then blame them for it.
In my case, when I had just found a job again – which meant that my partner had to take on some of the housework – and I asked him to put the dishes away in the cupboard in the order I had established, I quickly realised that I was giving him every reason not to do the washing up at all. The attitude adopted by many women is also, very often, to end up doing themselves – for the sake of a peaceful relationship – what the man has neglected to do. I don't think that, in the long run, such an attitude maintains a peaceful relationship. Because that's how we collect in memory resentment situations which ultimately leads us to bring them all up together and cause a separation, or to feel unhappy or abused in the relationship. Or we end up adopting a grumpy attitude that will eventually push the man further away.

Boys are implicitly taught to use women. And girls are taught that to live as a couple, you have to make a lot of concessions, the first being to "suffer to be beautiful" - something that would never be suggested to boys.

I believe that discrimination and injustice against women will decrease when women free themselves from such conditioning. When they refuse to spend their time seeking for "looking beautiful", to meet standards of attractiveness that are nothing more than conditioned criteria. And when they refuse to suffer for the sake of a peaceful relationship.

As long as women continue to make demands and requirements on dominant men, they will achieve little or nothing. Men will acquiesce without changing, or will always pretend not to understand, since women's behaviour does not match their words. They therefore have no reason to change, and this situation reinforces a form of unspoken authority. We all need to become conscious that non-verbal communication has a much greater effect than our words. When we say one thing but do not apply it in our behaviour, it is our behaviour that will convey the message. When a woman grumbles, demands, requires, nags, complains, and repeats herself over time, but continues to accept what she does not agree with, she is indirectly expressing that she does in fact agree. And that is the message that will get through.
I am not saying that the man is right not to listen to the verbal message. I am saying that it is ineffective and that it must be accompanied by something else that reinforces the message in practice, without resorting to the balance of power.

In a way, no matter how strong the dominant card is, we have almost no power to change it. It is much more the way in which the opposing card participates in this game of domination that can change the scenario.

Women learn to be loved conditionally, men do not. This is where women will have to learn to assert themselves. As long as women accept the unacceptable in order to be loved by men, they will help to perpetuate all inequalities, including rape culture and all other forms of violence against women.

This is not about placing the responsibility for inequality on women, but rather about realising that when a certain type of behaviour does not work, it is up to those seeking change to try new types of behaviour. This ties in with what is said in the chapter on rationality - A solution that has no effect – however rational it may be – is not a solution.

What I am trying to say is that in most cases of domination, the dominated cooperate more actively in their domination than it appears, but this happens in the details and over the long term, by unconsciously multiplying the unspoken, misunderstandings and inappropriate behaviours of everyday life. And this happens at the collective level. The most extreme violence perpetrated in some couples generally occurs as a result of micro-violence that has become established and accepted because those involved did not want to give it importance. But above all, because domination is the norm in all other couples. We are all immersed in these mentalities. In the long term, it is therefore in other couples (where there is no extreme or visible violence) that change must be brought about.

In this sense, it is not the miniskirt worn by the raped woman that is the reason for the rape. It is the miniskirts worn by millions of women that are one of the factors that perpetuate rape culture. Rape culture is therefore not the fault of women, but in certain circumstances, they can cooperate with it (despite themselves, because it is not conscious). I am exaggerating, of course, because it is far from being that simple. The idea is absolutely not to remove responsibility from men when they commit violence. And even less to point the finger at women as responsible for the rapes they suffer. That has absolutely nothing to do with it. But it is about a whole context in which women themselves are unwittingly caught up. Women who, in their daily lives, expose their legs, their cleavage, wear excessive make-up, and display other similar signs of seduction, are women who do nothing more than use soliciting techniques in their daily relationships. Of course, they are more likely to find sexual partners. But above all, they risk driving away more respectful men, or not being taken seriously. And by conveying this mentality, it spreads like wildfire. As long as women, or at least a large proportion of them, behave of their own accord as sexual objects, as children, as little helpers, in relation to men, men will not be able to see them any other way. The power of the dominant is, of course, much greater than that of the submissive. However, change can only be initiated by those who have the most to gain from it, namely the submissive.
Oprah Winfrey puts it this way:

> *"When you underestimate what you do, the world will underestimate who you are."*

Translated into the situation of inequality between men and women, it can be understood as follows: When women underestimate themselves, because that is what they have been taught to do, they themselves contribute significantly to the lack of respect that men will show them.
This provides a key to escaping the submissive condition that women still too often experience.
Let me give another example. When, in 2019, women around the world chanted the slogan *"You are the rapist"* to rhythmic music, in every language, but some did so in miniskirts, with peony-red lipstick, it sent a double message that was extremely effective: we demand/require to be respected, but we behave in a way that contradicts the verbal message. And it is the non-verbal, implicit message that will get through.

It is not a question of placing the blame for the injustices suffered by women on women themselves. It is much more a question of becoming conscious, both women and men, of the mechanisms that lead on the one hand to submission and on the other to domination. It is essential to verbally denounce all injustices: rape, incest, femicide, harassment, violence, abuse, machismo, misogyny, and all kinds of less visible discrimination. And it is essential to enforce the law to put a stop to such behaviour. But it is just as essential to decondition ourselves from certain gendered behaviours that lead women to implicitly invite men to continue dominating them. Gallantry is a perfect example. Accepting gallantry is implicitly accepting submission.
Respect and fairness will not come about through demands/requirements, but because people will no longer participate in giving power to those who can only make use of it.

And, although I have not yet specified this, it does not mean that all couples operate continuously with the balance of power. But it remains very much present, if only implicitly, in certain areas specific to each couple.

And coming back to the context of our destructive economy, at the global level, it works in exactly the same way. The proportion of individuals who are in a position of submission is enormous. And it is from this population that change can come. Just as with the unfair situation for women, it will not be those who suffer the worst injustices who will be able to restore justice. It is everyone else who can take responsibility for no longer participating implicitly and indirectly in these injustices. We are subjected to advertising, the cult of money and profit, television and film culture, social media, YouTubers and other online influences. In this sense, capitalising, travelling, consuming, partying, following fashions and following cultural highways are all vectors of submission. But it also affects our choice of language, our thoughts, our profession (in cases where we have real freedom to choose it). It concerns the way we live our relationships, as well as our ability to take a step back from what we are experiencing and how we feel. And it implies our ability to question all our assumptions and ways of functioning.

It is our detailed behaviours, the way we spend or invest every penny, that build the fortunes of those who dominate the world. Denouncing this domination is not enough; the key is to stop participating in it by ceasing to submit to it in order to benefit from secondary pleasures or earn our daily bread.

As long as we do not recognise our own role as submissive (unconsciously conditioned to be so), we remain doomed to rebel against what we continue to support.

And it is probably easier to learn to let go of the balance of power when we find ourselves on the side of submission. Even if there are situations where submission is relentless and nothing can free us from it; these are all purely violent and dictatorial situations where, except through manipulation, there is no way out.
On the other hand, in many cases, domination is abusive but not dictatorial. And in these cases, the person under its control is not really trapped in this situation and has the option of choosing to leave it, or to change it, by modifying their own way of participating in the issues at stake. But very often they are not conscious of this and/or lack the means to achieve it.

Yet, by being submissive, we are able to see the advantage of leaving the situation, which is rarely the case for the person who holds the power, especially since the latter generally denies that they are abusing it.

But also, the person who experiences submission has easier access to a different kind of attitude than that of power game. And to achieve this, one must be more conscious of the issues at stake in the relationship. Only then do we truly hold the cards in our hands. This requires a better understanding of our needs, our demands, our expectations, and all the possible ways to achieve our goals. As long as we do not perceive that we have a choice other than the most obvious one, which is to submit to the other person, to social pressure, to the norm, and above all, to what we believe about all of this, or even to submit the other person or try to do so, we remain locked into the same behaviours and the same conditioning. In extreme cases, it is the relationship itself that needs to be questioned. But in most cases, it is within the relationship itself that, by shifting our perspectives, we will find more creative alternatives to all the situations that trammel us.

These are mostly situations where, when we experience them, we accept to make concessions, not to set our boundaries, or not to respect ourselves, because we do not trust that we can get out of them any other way, and because unconscious fears paralyse us. The example that most readily comes to mind is once again that of a couple, where one of the partners, most often the woman, accepts difficult and sometimes intolerable relationship or living conditions simply out of fear of losing the love of their partner. In these

circumstances, implicitly, all power games are then permitted, and the partner with the power will generally abuse it at will, even when there is genuine love (other than passion) shared between the two partners. These situations of submission can also be found, for example, in employees who are afraid of losing their jobs, children or later students who are afraid of failing if they refuse to submit to something unfair. They can be found in all types of relationships and at all scales.

It is our fear of losing our partner, friend, job, etc., or of failing in a project, that leads us to make unacceptable concessions, to allow ourselves to be abused, to remain silent, and thus to submit to unfair injunctions (whether expressed, implied, or imagined). When we become able to face these fears, we regain our freedom of action.
Facing a fear consists, in a way, choosing to take a risk. It involves that we are prepared to lose in one way or another.
And this courage generally consists of the very strength that will enable us to avoid this risk of losing. This truly changes the dynamic in the relationship. Because when we are able to take the risk of losing, and therefore face the fear that this generates, we leave behind the demands/requirements, judgements, victimisation, and endless opposition that populate so many relationships. This state of mind then allows for a form of letting go, an acceptance of what is, and more understanding and empathy towards the other person, more respect, more indulgence, more confidence in oneself and in the other person. And this attitude allows the other person to lower their guard too. Not always. Not necessarily right away. In any case, when faced with such an attitude, it is no longer possible to dominate in the same way. And creativity and goodwill will do the rest.

v Designating someone at fault

Another aspect of the balance of power lies in a fairly widespread, but not universal, tendency to point out mistakes and simultaneously designate someone at fault. Most of us are incapable of observing a problem without trying to blame someone else for its existence. There is always someone to blame for the problems we experience, and we never consider ourselves responsible.

By pointing out the other person's mistake, we not only free ourselves from responsibility, but also, in the process, we lower the other person's status, who is "not up to" our expectations.

In a video accompanying the Gupta programme, Ashok Gupta expresses this:

> *"When your house is dirty, and you spend all your cleaning time looking for which window the dirt came in through, or who came in with muddy shoes, you're wasting your time. It doesn't matter. The important thing is to let go of the blame game and get on with the cleaning."*

To move from one tower to another, we don't have to look for someone to blame for bringing in the mess. The important thing is to start again on a solid foundation.
I'm not denying that in some cases, harmful actions must be stopped, especially on a large scale. But most of the innovations that will enable us to survive on the planet, regardless of the scale on which they are implemented, will be invested with a focus on their implementation, effectiveness and success, rather than on the problem that had to be left behind in order to initiate them.

And this principle also applies on a psychological level. Although we must remain vigilant so as not to allow the flaws that prevent us from evolving (the thoughts, emotions, actions and behaviours that bring us back to our old ways of functioning) to redevelop, there is no point in looking to our past, or to the causes or factors responsible for this: we must heal our current wounds and, above all, invest in what works, nothing else.

In the paradigm shift that awaits us, the important thing is not to designate culprits, point fingers at individuals or groups of people, but to get on with the change at the scale that is accessible to us.

vi Balance of power and self-confidence

Operating within the framework of power relations – whether we are submissive or domineering – is the biggest obstacle to developing our self-confidence.
In fact, contrary to what we might tend to believe, self-confidence is not something that can be built. It has always been within us, but it only manifests itself or flourishes under certain conditions. And the spirit of domination is a serious obstacle to self-confidence. Because true self-confidence, which is an enormous resource in life, only flourishes when we are capable of both humility and empathy, which the dominant tendency excludes de facto.
In this sense, women – who are generally more submissive – paradoxically have easier access to self-confidence than men.
Men, on the other hand, even if they shine, even if they are assertive, generally have much less self-confidence. This is because their assertiveness will always be based on the need to prove themselves to others. To prove their power, to prove their competence, to prove their virility. However, true self-confidence leads to a complete loss of this need to prove oneself to others, which is why it gives not only greater freedom, but also great strength. A strength of a completely different nature, no longer linked to power or control, but to an ability to influence without imposing, which is respectful and reassuring, requiring neither authority, violence nor manipulation, and which works instead through persuasion, contagion, and above all, something akin to compassion.

In a certain sense, even today and in a very significant way, the implicit education to which most men are subjected clearly limits their freedom much more than that of women (I'm not so much talking about freedom of action as about mental freedom). They certainly did not choose this, and most of them are probably not conscious of it. Just as the majority of them are probably undergoing this state of affairs. For there are unspoken injunctions that force them to constantly measure themselves against each other, never let themselves be led by one or more women, and prove themselves: prove their virility, prove their ability, prove their success, prove their strength, never let their emotions or vulnerability show. And they'll never be done with all of this. Putting all these aspects into words could, little by little, free them from this burden.
Here is the TEDx video of Landon Wilcock's testimony (16 min) *"Reimagining masculinity; my journey as a male sexual assault survivor"*, which, through the traumatic situation he experienced, provides a better understanding of the educational indoctrination into masculinity or virility that is inherent in our culture [242] - [see Ref 26bis].

And if we manage to evolve to weaken the use of power relations, we will all see our level of self-confidence increase. And the greater the confidence, the less necessary it is to resort to the use of power. In this sense, letting go of power relations gives access to many other psychological abilities, all of which work in the same direction, that of the heart.

However, our entire society has been built by people who measure themselves against each other, who seek to hold power over others, who seek to make a profit at any cost without regard for the human and environmental damage this requires, who favour rational approaches over those of the heart. A society that allows its members to have confidence in themselves, in life, and in others would take a completely different direction.

vii Balance of power and free will

By distancing ourselves from references to domination and submission, we will also have better access to our free will.
It is necessary to understand first and foremost that neither we nor anyone else has chosen to function as we always have. We are the product of our learning and conditioning mixed with natural reflexes and impulsive reactions. In all the jumble of injustices, imperfections, threats and incapacities that all humans evince, we must learn to see and understand that no one has chosen to go in the (harmful) direction they find themselves in.

We are much more subject to our unconscious reactions and thoughts than we are willing to admit. And awakening to consciousness is not so much about taking back control of our lives, thoughts, emotions, and actions, as it is about learning to let them function, no longer as our lower (primitive, original) nature dictates, but rather learning to follow our higher (spiritual) nature. And it is at this level that we will have to let go of all our human pride (vanity/ego). For although we do have free will, we use it very little, since 95% of our lives are lived according to our automatic thoughts, attitudes and actions. And when we do use it, we often make the worst choices, due to a lack of maturity, so to speak.

However, once our consciousness is more awakened, an essential element of our evolution becomes accessible. It consists of understanding that choosing to move towards the best, even though it really depends on free will, still means giving up doing what we like.

Free will, at a higher level of evolution, consists in part of giving up a form of freedom by following a path that life dictates to us as we go along. We then choose to do our small part..

For the more our consciousness awakens, the easier it becomes to decipher the path we must follow. However, behind this renunciation of a form of freedom lies enormous access to happiness. For when we follow the signs that life offers us (synchronicities), we discover that all events fall into place to fulfil our intentions. And the relative renunciation of freedom in our daily choices allows us to enjoy much greater freedom in our life choices and greatly increases the impact we have around us. This path is climbed very slowly through trial and error, as in all learning processes, always returning to our old ways of functioning at the beginning of this learning process. It is therefore filled with doubts.
A good book to explore this subject further is Laurence Luyé-Tanet's *"Ne crains pas que ta vie prenne fin un jour mais plutôt qu'elle n'ait jamais commencé"* (Don't *fear that your life will end one day*, but rather *that it never began*), (2019), Ed. Dunod [243].

Doubts are a sign that we are on a path of evolution. Certainties, on the other hand, are a sign that we are still a long way from being able to move forward.

The best illustration of our ability to reduce our freedom by choice is the example of lockdown – which almost all of us have experienced in the recent past – when it is experienced voluntarily rather than imposed on us. If we decide, on our own initiative, to limit our physical social interactions for our own good, and for the good of others, in a broader societal context, then we are acting outside the framework of a balance of power. Our attitude is then turned outward, and our personal interests are less of a factor. This is because the more indirect aim of lockdown is not to prevent infection, which could eventually affect 60-70% of the population, but to prevent the speed of infection from overwhelming hospitals and intensive care units, which would lose their effectiveness and cause many more people to suffer greatly and die. This is what the authorities have imposed on us. However, those who have best understood the principle find it much easier to follow this order and do so to the letter, coping much better with the restrictions it entails. Those who have not understood it, on the other hand, will try to circumvent certain rules, experience lockdown as a significant loss of freedom and a source of frustration, and dream only of a "return to normal".

The difference in perspective and the way events are perceived in the two cases is enormous. However, we must not forget that living conditions also play a very important role in how we get through such episodes.

When we make conscious, motivated choices for the good of others before our own good, we remove ourselves from the balance of power and experience the consequences with much greater happiness. Experiencing events by choice rather than by obligation completely transforms the way we experience them.

g - How the balance of power defines our social lives and our spending

i Behaviours, references and social markers resulting from the widespread prevalence of the balance of power

The main behaviours that characterise Western society and can be associated with the balance of power are: the pursuit of wealth, competitiveness, the pursuit of status, judgement (both judging others and submitting to the supposed or actual judgement of others), and on a more global and economic level: the pursuit of growth.

To translate these behaviours into practice at an individual level, there is a whole series of codes and references such as: diplomas, titles, degrees, promotions, prizes and medals, championships, ratings and honours, the brands we show off with, stars, thumbs up: everything that allows us to measure ourselves against others and to measure goods against each other.
Although this is all relative, access to these references is not the same for everyone. First of all, there is a whole series of vicious circles, such as: children of wealthy parents (executives, liberal professions, etc.) have easier access to university than those who are less well-off (manual workers, employees). Therefore, their access to a status of power or wealth is much more favourable.
But there is also the whole cultural aspect, which means that even with status, one does not always have access to power or wealth. Gender, skin colour, culture, religion, nationality and mother tongue can all be implicit factors that reduce access to positions of power. This is evident, for example, in access to employment and, once employed, in the actual power that can be exercised in the job, or the level of remuneration corresponding to the profession.

Apart from the broad outlines of power and wealth, which are mainly linked to profession, there is a whole range of social behaviours that depend on the balance of power. These vary in significance depending on the environment.
First, there are the signs that categorise people and place them on a social value scale. These are, broadly speaking, possessions: housing and decoration, means of transport, clothing, holiday destinations, frequency and places of outings, etc. Whether you live in the Bronx or Beverly Hills, Molenbeek or Uccle, it has a completely different effect on your business card – if you have a business card (also a sign of a certain status).
Even the people we associate with are themselves signs that categorise us in one milieu or another. And social status defines a certain amount of power and wealth for us. Almost all our relationships are constructed in such a way that we conform to the box defined by our culture, education, gender, etc., and therefore to the accessories they imply in order to impose, integrate or submit us in the various social circles we frequent.

But within circles, groups, couples and families, there are also rivalries, competition and identification – either with a leader or with a common point of reference. In sport, for example, and football in particular, we identify with our city or country. And flags are the best way to recognise each other. These same flags

that we defend in times of war. Because the concept is the same, whether it is exploited in a playful or competitive way for profit, or in an openly deadly way in armed attacks.

And simply, on an individual level, in the way we relate to others, we have a range of attitudes, values and references that we can use on a daily basis and which are all rooted in power relations. Everyone uses them with varying frequency and intensity, but it is a baggage common to all human beings, and we are implicitly taught it from childhood onwards, for example:
pride, merit, reward, honour, punishment, vanity, avoidance, denial, lying, manipulation, all forms of abuse, blackmail, judgement, justification, injunction, obedience and disobedience, rebellion, mockery, provocation, defiance; as well as communication attitudes such as: peremptory, authoritarian, contemptuous, condescending, paternalistic, arrogant, insolent, plaintive, grumpy, aggressive, discriminatory, ... We could go on listing dozens more. Each of these values and behaviours is based on an unequal conception or motivation. And even if these behaviours are partly intuitive or natural, they are also partly learned.

And for the more extreme behaviours, or those considered deviant, we can name: corruption, theft, rape and prostitution, slavery, racism, harassment, mistreatment, and of course crime and torture. These behaviours, which are also based on power relations, are characterised by the use of a form of power or violence that seriously harms others, whether in terms of physical or psychological integrity, freedom or possessions, and ultimately, life itself.

And by extension, mentalities guided by power relations will influence, on a more global level, the direction of the organisation and the evolution of society: through excessive technologisation, blind faith in science*, obsession with objectivity and rationalisation**, and, of course, growth, competitiveness and enrichment.

> Notes:
> * This is not to deny the contributions of science, but to reject the notion that science is the sole reference point and that scientific research can only be guided by rationality, when in fact it is in its best interest to be guided primarily by the heart.
> ** In a way, anyone who claims to be objective demonstrates that they know themselves very poorly and that, in fact, they are likely to lack objectivity. Seeking to approach objectivity and claiming to be totally objective are two very different things. Logical, rational, Cartesian intelligence is therefore not the pinnacle of intelligence. It is merely an effective tool when used by mature individuals, which human is not.

All these references – among many others – are based on or directly related to the balance of power, domination and submission. Until we understand this, we will continue to cling to them again and again. It is high time to find a way to move on.

In other words, almost all negatively trending behaviours are directly or indirectly linked to a mentality based on the balance of power. And some attitudes considered positive in our society are also linked to this mentality. For example, being a champion is one of the most coveted statuses in many fields and generates universal admiration. Yet being a champion means having 'eliminated' all your opponents, having made them lose, having made them bite the dust. The majority therefore find themselves on the losing side. To idolise a few, you need a lot of losers.
The most extreme examples of these competitions are the gladiatorial combat to the death that took place in Roman times. And even today, bullfights (corridas) are nothing more than ritualised executions, where, although there is danger for the toreador, it is the animal that will inevitably lose its life; this makes the concept less reprehensible (at present, but not for much longer) than the death of the gladiator; but which operates on the same principle of power relations and extreme domination, capable of taking life for pleasure, just like hunting.

And when the adage says, "the end justifies the means," it only confirms an approach based on power relations. In our society, all means are acceptable, even if they are not necessarily permitted. Our ends generally consist of "winning", i.e. gaining the upper hand over others. And whether they are material, physical, verbal or psychological, there are no limits to the means we use to achieve our ends. We are capable of waging war and killing and injuring tens, hundreds of thousands, even millions of individuals in order to achieve peace.

Gandhi expressed the opposite:

> *"The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree."*

And in this sense, when we evolve, it is not so much our projects that are called into question first, but our means of implementing them. And when a shift in attitude occurs, the result is that our projects are transformed.

Language also illustrates our inability to transcend power relations. Success is achieved through "challenges", "competition" and "rivalry". To carry out a project successfully, one must be "combative", "fight" to achieve it, and be able to "defend" it. The means we use to achieve this are often "weapons". To succeed, you have to be a "fighter", a "warrior" or "be a wolf" or a "killer". And that's not to mention the whole aspect of male domination that goes with it: "having the stature", or conversely, "not having balls" or being a "sissy".
Even if you are non-violent or a feminist, it is very difficult to express yourself without resorting to this kind of language and expressions.
The term "non-violence" itself is still in essence imbued with "violence" in its name. This shows how long is still the way to go.

When we stop fighting and struggling to carry out our projects, we stop seeing everything that might oppose us as an adversary, and we start to see them as interlocutors, sometimes even partners.

This shift in thinking rarely happens abruptly, but ultimately it represents a complete upheaval of our frame of reference, because it affects every aspect of our lives.

ii Social, cultural and commercial spheres of influence

In our society, we are surrounded by traps designed to make us believe that the material aspects of our lives are the basis of our success, our happiness and our social achievement. Whether it be the mass media, mainstream cinema, advertising, our social circle, shopping centres, hypermarkets, GAFAM, fashion, cultural policies... all aspects of society contribute to this. We are surrounded by this mentality.
And once we achieve wealth (or at least comfort, i.e. when we manage to make ends meet without difficulty), we are never allowed to let our guard down, while at the same time seeking every opportunity to 'take advantage' and 'treat ourselves'. We have to wear the mask, maintain our status, prove again and again that we are up to the task, and chase after small pleasures: outings, gifts, parties, trips, collections of all kinds.
Everything contributes to make us participate in a game, a race with – and at the same time against – everyone else, the goal of which is to appear beautiful, happy, brilliant, rich, even influential, and to remain so – with the real aim of being accepted and integrated. We live in a society where the markers of social life are oriented towards rivalry and competition, which leads to the paradox that, in order to be accepted, or even loved, one must be better than others. Those who succeed best are apparently the best integrated, but not always appreciated, and the others, the vast majority, will never stop striving for a better place.

And of course, those who can satisfy their desires in this way enjoy it, but it is not certain that they find meaning in it, and therefore even less certain that it contributes to their true happiness.
To escape this, we must either belong to a very privileged milieu (not in economic terms, but in terms of consciousness) in order to shift our view of the world. Or we must be hit hard by a catastrophe (personal or broader) that shakes our references sufficiently to allow us to shift our perspective.

In this respect, lockdown has once again played a constructive role for part of the population. It has allowed many people to take a step back from these social markers. Not only are we capable of living without them, and even of living happily, but lockdown has also allowed many people to rediscover a freedom to be themselves, a freedom to behave as they wish, a freedom to manage their time, their leisure activities and their limits, and to regain a much greater sense of serenity. But in addition, lockdown has allowed many people to rediscover a freedom to be themselves, a freedom to behave as they wish, a freedom to manage their time, their leisure activities and their limits, and to regain a much greater sense of serenity. For a few weeks, social pressure virtually disappeared and we were no longer obliged to keep up appearances or maintain the status we are accustomed to displaying.

But it is not only materialistic aspects that are dictated to us from all sides, it is also all the models of social relationships that are presented to us in the entertainment media (television, mainstream cinema, literature (including comics), video games). Television in particular inundates us on a daily basis with films and series, reality TV, game shows and sports programmes involving competition, rivalry, manipulation, intrigue, violence, etc.

These media immerse us in a world that is very rarely exemplary. Through what they convey to us, they educate and condition us to a mentalité where the power of wealth, violence and power relations reign supreme. And so, they attach us to the most destructive aspects of our collective functioning. This is the direction we give to our thoughts during our leisure time.
And that's not even counting the daily news. Imagine the devastating effect of all the negative news that is poured out to billions of people, feeding us every day, for half an hour, with violence, death, war, crime, conflicts of all kinds, and every possible and imaginable piece of negative news (with real good news remaining very much in the minority, if not exceptional).
And just because we condemn what we see does not mean that it does not influence us. We will see this in the chapter on mirror neurons.

With television having prepared our brains well, social media networks simply harvest the results and exploit them even further through addiction of using them, algorithms, dehumanisation of virtual communication, personalised advertising, and the exploitation of our personal data, all without moderation.

iii Balance of power in the professional context

The professional environment is no exception when it comes to the systematic use of power relations.
In medium-sized or smaller private companies, competition and the law of profit prevail most of the time. Depending on the financial health of the firm or business, and on the ethical values and character of its leaders, we can find ourselves in the best or worst of worlds. And quite often further from the best.
In this context, power relations can be directly exercised through the threat of the ejection seat. Loyalty to a position is rarer than in public service jobs. And in many cases, to keep one's job, one must outperform one's colleagues, even to the point of burnout if necessary. However, the fact that the company remains on a human scale can help maintain a more cordial relationship between hierarchical levels and, in this case, avoid these excesses. No generalisation is possible.
Conversely, in large organisations and institutions, the balance of power manifests itself differently because they are governed by an anonymous collective, by laws and rules that are largely devoid of any

human aspect and imply authority and hierarchy, but which this time are depersonnified. It is in these administrative tentacles that the following can best develop: *Peters' Principle* (the rise through the hierarchy until reaching the level of incompetence), abuse, harassment, corruption and scheming, as well as *bullshit jobs*, etc. It is in these environments that incompetence, useless work and dysfunction are found more than anywhere else. This is because people are supposed to follow the hierarchy and the rules on the surface, but the will is not always there, ranks, jobs and salaries are fixed and protected, and many try to get the biggest slice of the pie by making as little effort as possible.
These aspects are also very common in very large companies, when their size makes them resemble large institutions such as banks, the post office, public transport companies, telecommunications companies, insurance companies, political parties and trade unions, and even some multinationals where the dissolution of responsibilities is such that it sometimes becomes possible for each employee to end up working like a civil servant in an administration.
Fully cooperative work is rarer in such organisations. We are more likely to encounter an 'everyone for themselves' attitude, which reduces the opportunities for collective intelligence and creativity to flourish.

iv The balance of power and the virtual world – a school of narcissism

Virtual communication, particularly via social networks, further accentuates competitiveness, the race for status and one-upmanship, since it is the façade (the wall) that represents us, and the number of followers and thumbs up that reveals our status.

On the other hand, the more our relationships take place in the virtual world, the less empathy they are imbued with and the more they are marked by materialism. In the sense that, hidden behind a screen, and without any real consciousness that the people we are talking to are human beings, we find ourselves communicating with anonymous people, or at least people we do not know in real life. And aspects of competitiveness, rivalry, tournament and duels are very prominent in virtual relationships, because we behave as if we were in a video game. Anything goes, and the goal is to remain visible, to win, to get the most thumbs up, to create a buzz.

The language itself is often contaminated by this mentality. In emails, the basic rules of politeness are fading. We no longer say hello or thank you. Sometimes we even spare ourselves the trouble of forming sentences. And it is not uncommon to show such a lack of empathy that we allow ourselves to send a link that we find interesting or important to someone personally, or even to an entire mailing list (as long as possible), without even introducing the subject or giving a reason to open it. This is because we consider the fact that we are the ones sending it to be sufficient reason for others to trust us and be curious.

Using a mobile phone can have exactly the same effect. We lose consciousness of the people around us and impose a conversation on them, without any restraint.

In this sense, participation in virtual life exacerbates certain unconscious aspects of our personalities, particularly a sense of omnipotence, a form of narcissism.

v Balance of power and cars

In Europe, North America and most other wealthy countries, a significant proportion of the adult population and families own a car.
"The car means freedom."
Indeed, and it also gives you a lot of power. It allows you to have the world at your feet; and in the process: to pollute the air, warm the climate, deplete resources, produce waste, and cause a great deal of other destruction on the planet depending on the road infrastructure and facilities available to drivers.

The freedom offered by the car is a kind of trap. It is much more than a means of transport for going to work or driving the children to school. Having a car takes us away from reality. Just like the possibility of flying anywhere in the world. The ability to reach almost any place almost instantly whenever we want makes us lose our sense of distance. We set out to colonise every place. The world has become our garden.

With cars, we clog the roads at rush hour, we clog parking spaces the rest of the time, and we indulge our every whim to go shopping, sightseeing, partying and even travelling. Cars are the ultimate accessory for the wealthy. They take them for granted. They are also the best reflection of our status.
As cars can transport almost anything, they facilitate our spending and accumulation of possessions.

In a society where not everyone has a car, it is those who own one (or even several) who have the most power. They are the same people who can afford to buy their homes outside the city, or even buy a second home. They usually have a garden, organise barbecues with friends who also have cars, go away for weekends to enjoy themselves, and go out in the evening until the early hours. For them, this is obvious.
Only for them.

All these activities are not really possible for people who do not have a car, or at least not with the same ease of getting around spontaneously and instantly. People with and without cars belong, in a way, to different castes. This is no longer entirely the case, however, as many young people no longer consider buying a car, even when they live with their families. And that requires a completely different way of organising their lives.
It should be noted that for a still significant portion of the upper middle class and the wealthiest, turning 18 remains an important milestone. It is not so much about reaching the age of majority as it is about finally being able to get a driving licence, own a car and have the world at your feet. It is as if, without a car, you remain somewhat of a child, not fully equipped to live your life as a human being.

The motivations that lead to the use of a car as a vehicle for total freedom, or that drive people to seek out the lowest prices, or that lead them to acquire all the ultra-comforts offered by home automation, stem from the same mental constructs as those that result in colonial and dominant behaviour. We have simply replaced direct human enslavement with technology and, indirectly, with human enslavement across the globe and/or the destructive exploitation of resources and the environment.
Not having a car requires much greater adaptation in terms of schedule, choice of activities, and choice of possessions. It requires much more flexibility, respect for others and the environment, and it means submitting to dominants who own a car. This allows for a return to a form of humility.

vi Balance of power, consumption, and the pursuit of profit are fundamentally and intrinsically linked

> *"... in any society, the distribution of income and wealth reflects above all the distribution of power ..."* [244]
>
> Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson in their book (already cited) "The Spirit Level - Why Equality is Better for Everyone" (2010) [245], Penguin Publisher. [see Ref 10]

As we saw in the first part, power and wealth are closely linked, as is well known. But it is less obvious to make the connection between wealth – profit – consumption, and the mentality linked to the balance of power, because a large part of power relations play out on an unconscious or semi-conscious level. In the first part of the book, we also saw that money confers status, that a lack of money stimulates survival behaviours, and that these behaviours turn into greed once survival is assured, leading to a race for ever greater wealth; and that all of us, as consumers, generally show a high degree of complacency towards the whole system of profit, waste, pollution, exploitation, etc.

Each of these different types of behaviour involves power relations, which are also different in nature, but all of which originate in our survival instincts. Awareness of these patterns can enable us to learn to dissociate ourselves from them and introduce us to new modes of behaviour that are more suited to the situations we encounter and that allow us to leave the balance of power behind. Let us try to see what behaviours will manifest themselves and in what situations.

- Survival behaviours

When survival is the main concern, resorting to power struggles is inevitable, and it can be cruel, because in defending our own bread and that of our clan, we are prepared to take away the bread of anyone who prevents us from accessing it.

Survival behaviour is selfish behaviour in which we seek to serve ourselves before others, to survive at all costs. It is, in essence, a behaviour marked by the balance of power. And although in capitalist society, most of the time, our survival is no longer at stake, we remain trapped in this straitjacket. There is no shortage of illustrations on this subject. Regularly, during sales promotions, certain retailers have to deal with scrambles and violence when customers are willing to fight to get the jackpot promised in the advertisement.
One example is the opening of a store in Taquara, Brazil, in August 2020 [246]

Almost the same is true during sales, when some customers, in order to buy two to three times more clothes, devastate the shelves, turning them into a mess of rags scattered on the floor. These people are not in danger of survival, yet they persist in the same type of behaviour.

Even with a stable and comfortable income, few people stop trying to earn more and buy at low prices. The fear of scarcity gives way to the accumulation and collection of goods. And it is habit that keeps us doing what we have always done. In a way, even though the threats of scarcity have disappeared, we remain in survival mode, in a way that is instinctive, conditioned and learned.

- Greedy behaviours

Once survival is assured by an income that allows us to buy a little more than bread, but which is not abundant, and access to the superfluous becomes possible, another type of behaviour develops, slightly different but still quite similar to survival behaviour, although generally a little less visible. We then enter into a process of endless consumption, always trying to get more for less money.

And everything will lead us there, because as we saw in the previous chapter, in many ways we are all influenced by our environment, our surroundings, the media, advertising, fashion, or culture, which bombard us with every possible variation on the theme that we will be better off with more: more comfort, more luxury, more pleasure, more success, more facilities, more power of attraction or seduction, more travel, further afield, etc. ... And that's not to mention that in many areas, the more we own, the more we are led to own more for maintenance, storage, or simply to complete the range of our initial purchases. And when it is not the direct attractions of wealth that are touted to us, it is the social obligations and threats associated with it: staying on par, having our place, not feeling rejected, enjoying ourselves while we still can...

These attitudes keep us in a consumerist mindset and in a state of greed. Having enough is therefore never enough. We are therefore conditioned, raised and educated to simply seek to be richer in order to satisfy this insatiability. And the more our motivation is sharpened, the more we will be prepared to elbow our way to achieve our goals. All these attitudes, without exception, are derived from our instincts. It is as if, in our society, everything is done to keep us living in reflexive behaviour and prevent us from accessing our conscience, our will, our free will and our benevolent intentions. This is not far from the adage "bread and circuses for the people". And it is clear that all this restricts our ability to evolve and give meaning by confining us to a pseudo-hypnotic state. It is not so much people in power who are directing all this with a well-defined strategy, but rather the entire population that is participating in the extremely complex web that all this constitutes. We are all part of these abuses. And the richest and most powerful people are themselves much more caught up in this mentality than anyone else. Perhaps we could even consider

that when they appropriate the common good – in the sense that by enriching themselves extravagantly, they prevent part of humanity from having access to the minimum necessary to live decently – they "do not really know what they are doing". And so, even if some of them suspect this reality, they live in denial, blindly fighting to maintain their privileges at all costs. And it is not necessary to be extremely wealthy to behave this way. As soon as we have access to more than we need, this is generally the type of behaviour we will adopt.

For although our motivations in life are not entirely guided by greed, the fact remains that voluntarily choosing to stop consuming or to pursue wealth remains, for the majority, a vain wish, as long as part of our relationships with others consists of having or keeping our place in the sun.

Materialistic behaviours that consist of consuming, enriching ourselves, following trends, defending our status on the one hand, and behaviours guided by power relations and power games on the other, are therefore interdependent and feed off each other. Materialism and power relations, although distinct in our minds, belong to the same mental process. The more we function by measuring ourselves against others, by trying to gain ascendancy over our neighbour, the more our social references will be measured in terms of profit, status and possessions.

But the opposite is also true. The more we become able to break free from these reference values, detaching ourselves from materialism, the more we become able to open ourselves up to values of the heart, through solidarity, self-giving, sharing, empathy, and quite simply respect. The ripple effect is therefore reversed. And from then on, the more our behaviours are dictated by the heart, the more we will naturally move away from values linked to money.

Regardless of the social level at which materialism and power games occur, the consequences all point in the same direction.

Buying the latest fashionable bauble in the sales is not really comparable to amassing billions of dollars in shares in multinationals that employ neo-slaves on the other side of the world while destroying the environment. And yet, the mental process underpinning this type of behaviour is the same. The first case is closer to impulsive behaviour, while the second is based on a mental construct founded on reasoning based on those same impulses. There is no real evolution between the two, just a greater complexification in the ins and outs. And the bauble bought by one person may have been produced by one of the companies that will enrich the other. And in this sense, on different scales, everyone is acting in the direction of consumerism, growth, and all their destructive consequences. Because we act indirectly and unconsciously, according to our fears and impulses. And our wastefulness and futility are more akin to our survival instincts than to signs of civilisation.

In a way, even if we have enough income for our basic needs, we will always tend to continue to enrich ourselves in order to keep our head up. And this can only be done at the expense of others or the environment.
This corresponds to the image of someone who, losing their footing in the water, leans on the heads of their neighbours to keep their head above water (whether they are aware of it or not). And this tendency will be more or less pronounced depending on the environment in which we live.

We put on blinders so as not to see it, and we calm our conscience by donating a few money to the annual charity drive that television promotes with big show and tear-jerking testimonials. Then, the very next day, we resume our marathon of consumption.

- Our complacency

Greed implies another behaviour that also involves power relations, but on a different level: our complacency. This means that we agree to buy products whose production has resulted in the exploitation of workers, damage to the environment (transport, pollution, destruction of nature, animal mistreatment and depletion of resources), as well as lower quality that can be classified as planned obsolescence. These products are therefore cheaper and are imported from the other side of the world. And we refuse to know anything about their production conditions as long as they are available, cheap, and meet our requirements (which, incidentally, have mostly been inspired directly or indirectly by advertising, fashion, and marketing). This means that we have absolutely no consideration for the chain of destruction upstream of these products, which is the ultimate dominant attitude, similar on a different scale to that of a master who is indifferent to the living conditions of his slaves, or a man who, through seduction and gallantry, offers his female employees and associates promotion in exchange for sex. We are therefore acting indirectly, just like slave owners, colonialists and predatory macho men. And because the consequences of our behaviour are so distant and diluted in the masses, we refuse to take responsibility for them, shifting it onto the producers. Yet these producers would not be able to carry out their misdeeds if there were no buyers.

Yet the news keeps us informed of all these abuses. Multinationals are regularly blamed for their malpractice, as are banks. Most of us are aware, at least to some extent, of the existence of tax havens, free trade zones, offshoring, appalling working conditions in certain countries, famine and poverty elsewhere in the world, and the links between certain wars and oil production or mineral extraction. But we look the other way. When someone confronts us with reality, we justify ourselves, we make excuses, we deny, we change the subject. It's far away, we are powerless, a drop in the ocean, we have other more important and urgent problems to solve here and now, etc. If we had to start finding out all the details about the origin of everything we buy, we would never get anything else done. And anyway, what's the point of me making such an effort when my neighbour continues to consume galore?

Except that my neighbour will give exactly the same answer, and in this game we are only trying to prove once again the rivalry between our powers, and in this case, our bad faith.

Because we don't want to know, or because we are ignorant of some of these mechanisms, we educate our children in complete ignorance of these issues.
Here is just one example that is fairly representative of our attitude towards the environment: many children who eat their slab of fish or steak are completely unaware that an animal had to be killed to obtain it. And as meat and fish consumption increases exponentially, the oceans are being depleted, and billions of livestock are sent to the slaughterhouse every year to end up on our plates – or, in a third of cases, in the bin.
If we had to kill these animals ourselves, we would probably change our attitude.

By becoming conscious of this tendency towards complacency, we can gradually open our eyes to how we practise it on a personal level. In reality, we first learn to see it in others, until the day we finally admit that we are not immune to it either. For more on this subject, see also my article (already cited) *"It is our complacency towards the system that allows it to perpetuate itself"*. [247] - [see Ref A].

If you have skipped the chapters with figures: from the chapter on the indecency of dividends to the end of the chapter on the millions of deaths linked to poverty in the first part of the book, perhaps now is the time to read them. For it is here that it becomes possible to make the connection between the monstrosity of certain statistics on a global level and those of our small individual behaviours that we believe to be insignificant.

- Behaviours of competition

And when wealth increases further, survival behaviours will perpetuate. Beyond a certain social level, there is a widespread belief that our success, our reputation, our ability to be loved or to seduce, depends on our status, of which our wealth and the signs of wealth we display are the most visible part. The attachment to luxury brands, mentioned at the beginning of the book, is the most obvious example of this. It is therefore a need for formal recognition, in the form of rivalry with our peers, that will push us further into this quest for wealth.

- Requirements-based behaviours

Beyond that, the more wealth and possessions we accumulate, the more we become accustomed to the pleasures they can provide, sometimes making us dependent, but also shaping our mentality towards a culture of easy pleasure... and power, since money gives power. The pleasures that money allows us to obtain are supposed to compensate for or distract us from our shortcomings, frustrations, sorrows, stresses, and all the hardships that life will inevitably make us go through. To the point where we end up considering these crutches as our due, and as essential to our happiness, forgetting that they are privileges we enjoy. The pleasure and mirage of happiness through money will lead us to always want more. And we will become accustomed to demanding/requiring privileges, allowing ourselves to be influenced by those who have even more than we do, and helping ourselves at the expense of others who cannot afford to do so.

And this could also be observed in response to the restrictions imposed during the pandemic. Those who rebelled most against these restrictions were not necessarily those who suffered the most, but rather those whose privileges were reduced by them. A significant proportion of the protests were not organised with the aim of finding solutions to support isolated people or to provide financial assistance to those who had lost everything. The protests were geared towards requiring the return of all the pleasures that had been temporarily denied to the most privileged: travel, going out, shopping, etc.

- Behaviours that defend our privileges

And finally, the more privileges we enjoy, the more energy and money we will invest in trying to keep them. And power is a royal road to privileges. So keeping power becomes almost an obligation. Wealth therefore gives power and is necessary to keep it.

- Power relations are never far from our materialistic behaviour and our cupidity

And as long as we rely on these illusions of social belonging and material happiness to define what we eat, what we wear, where we live, how we move around, how we entertain ourselves, what we are interested in, what we identify with, and even who we associate with, we will not be able to change the overall equation of the pursuit of profit.

Survival behaviours, greed for more, the pursuit of status, complacency, the fact of conceiving that everything is due to us, dependence on easy pleasures, and the fear of losing our privileges are all facets that drive the pursuit of profit. And since we are all involved in this competition in one way or another, it is power games and power relations that rule the roost.

We don't think about it in those terms. It is largely unconscious, implicit once again. Especially since these are not the only issues at stake in our lives. But if we have the financial resources to afford more than the

bare minimum of comfort, and if we analyse in detail all our purchases and all our reasons for earning more money, we can effectively link each of them to a quest for:
- status, success, recognition;
- or even with a habit or addiction to easy pleasures, our carefree attitude, the benefit of having power;
- or even an attempt to compensate for our failures, shortcomings, and frustrations.
And even in our search for comfort, there is often an underlying desire for status, ease, pleasure, recognition or privilege, with a categorical refusal to consider the consequences of our purchases. Because accepting to ask ourselves this question requires us to change our attitude.

Although we are not all involved in the same way, we are nevertheless all concerned. Not recognising this is not a sign that we are spared from the phenomenon, but rather a sign that we are very unconscious of our behaviour patterns.

vii Leaving the balance of power leads to a loss of interest in wealth and consumption

Money having become an instrument of power; when we become capable of losing interest in power in all areas of our lives, we will gradually lose interest in our status and the judgement of others. Our activities and interests will shift towards areas where social pressure is less intense. We will then discover true riches that are not material. We will also abandon our survival instincts that led us to hoard and collect. Our values will shift towards simplicity, authenticity, integrity and rightness. And the more they consolidate in these directions, the more greed, consumption and spending will become burdens that we will try to avoid, or even denounce. This does not happen overnight. However, the more our awareness grows, the more obvious it becomes to abandon these old habits. And in this case, it does not require any more effort. Our behaviours align with our state of mind. And if we are lucky enough to walk this path with the help and support of people who are moving forward in parallel, it stimulates, facilitates and accelerates the transition.

The period following the lockdown in 2020 allowed for a furtive awakening of consciousness. There were clicks of realisation, but for the majority, they did not last, and most of us plunged back into the consumerist mindset as soon as the restrictions were lifted.
However, other crises will follow, and will continue to follow, reinforcing the beginnings of the change that took place during the pandemic. This is because the pandemic succeeded, at least at the beginning, in temporarily exerting two influences that point in this direction.

Firstly, the massive and almost immediate spirit of solidarity that developed from the start of the first lockdown generated significant disapproval of the pursuit of profit. Those who attempted to make profits while helping to combat the virus were directly pointed out both by the authorities, and by citizens and the media. Attention was focused on the care to be provided and the material conditions that made it possible, but also on the financial survival of individuals. The survival of businesses was already less of a priority, and calls were quickly made for dividends to be cancelled, along with the cancellation of debt for the least wealthy countries and the cessation of armed conflicts. This did not last, but it did exist at the time, and in an almost generalised manner. It is therefore no longer possible to deny that this is simply possible.

Secondly, living in lockdown has created a withdrawal effect among many consumers. And even though online shopping has developed very quickly, a section of the population has been content to buy only what meets their most basic needs. In addition, all entertainment and leisure venues (restaurants, cafés, cinemas, theatres, nightclubs, museums, swimming pools, sports centres, amusement parks) were closed, and cultural events of all sizes were cancelled one after the other. The entire population was forced to put a stop to much of its overconsumption and addiction to easy and fleeting pleasures, while rediscovering what is essential.

This withdrawal from overconsumption and the condemnation of profit were short-lived, but they allowed part of the population to experience the benefits of it. And I have no doubt that the accumulation of crises will lead us straight to persevere naturally in this direction.

h - Balance of power on a collective scale

Ways of thinking, communicating and relating based on power relations transpire from all our behaviours. And what is tangible at the personal level also applies at the collective level. If we continue to persevere in these patterns, we are condemning ourselves in the medium term (both humanity and millions of animal and plant species), whether through wars, famines, global warming, pollution, the collapse of biodiversity, the depletion of resources, epidemics, shortages, ... or even all of these at once.

This is because in our Western, capitalist society, most relationships between communities are based on the balance of power, regardless of the social groups involved: whether between nations, cultures, religions, ethnic origins, genders, companies or social classes. All our differences can lead to potential rivalries, conflicts and other power games. History is marked by so many of them with examples, starting with slavery, but also including serfdom, colonialism, genocides, crusades, wars and omnipresent terrorism, torture, walls built on so many borders; and their share of victims and injustices through subjugation, exploitation, poverty, famine, mistreatment, abuse of all kinds, rape, racism, harassment, and all their consequences. And beyond the purely destructive register, everything is hierarchical or subject to power games: institutional and entrepreneurial structures, trade unions, lobbies, party politics with its games of majorities and oppositions, championships in sport, rivalry in commerce, trophies in culture. Nothing is spared.

Moreover, the evolution of capitalism in recent decades has completely changed the face of the economy by focusing stubbornly and even obsessively on economic growth and commercial competition (even the majority of left-wing parties play along), and by putting themselves blinders on their consequences. For this mentality has insidiously and partially replaced the most openly conflictual and dictatorial aspects of our civilisation. And it is the insidious aspect of these mechanisms - through their indirect consequences - that leads to increased social inequalities and dramatic situations for a very large part of the world's population, whose figures I quoted in the chapter on "It is the extreme wealth of the richest that keeps millions of the poorest dying", as well as for the natural environment as a whole.

By abolishing some forms of violence, we have replaced them with others, making them less visible by relocating them, or more insidious by dispersing them or making them more perverse. The privileges of some are always based on injustices done to others. And we are rarely conscious of this.

And our blindness itself obstructs our goals. As long as we are unable to see the source of the problem (or even its existence), and as long as we are unable to experiment with solutions that come from a completely different way of thinking, we are doomed to find only plaster solutions to the visible part of these problems, ignoring their true nature and allowing them to develop underground.

Furthermore, understanding these issues intellectually is not enough to be able to transform them.
We will have to awaken to a consciousness of these tendencies and evolve in order to manage to abandon them and learn new ways of overcoming obstacles, dealing with failure and resolving disagreements. And the awakening of each individual is a catalyst for the awakening of the community.

Gandhi, in a way, summarised the usefulness of the balance of power quite well when he said:

> *"An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind."*

And it seems that we are not so far from blindness.

I can understand that for some, linking the balance of power to most of the problems encountered in capitalist society may seem inconsistent at first glance.
And yet!
Look around you: all disagreements, conflicts, dysfunctions, judgements, injustices, ... are the result of an equation that involves the balance of power. Remove the balance of power from the equation, and it will find an unexpected solution. And the idea is not so much to work on all these issues in order to remove power relations and find a solution. The idea is much more to work on the evolution of mentalities in a more general way so that the systematic use of the balance of power is simply no longer part of our references and choices.

I could have attempted to write these chapters on rationality and balance of power without first referring to the concept of profit and without mentioning anything about inequalities, poverty, extreme wealth, and the cause-and-effect relationship that I see between these realities. But I think that our collective denial of these realities reflects our personal shadow side, which we do not want to see.

On a human scale, extreme wealth, our carefreeness for environmental causes, male domination, racism, institutionalised violence, the almost total indifference with which migrants, famine victims, slaves of neoliberalism and many other causes are treated: all these colossal dysfunctions are our collective shadow. And we will not be able to change the situation as long as we operate on an individual level with our personal shadow, which makes us incapable of perceiving alternative ways of functioning that could prevent us from continuing to walk amidst so much inconsistency.

> Note:
>
> The following chapters are probably the least developed in this book.
>
> The more I progressed in writing the book, the more the concepts they contain revealed themselves to me. However, although I am quite familiar with the subjects discussed and I understand their direct link to the balance of power in an increasingly clear and even obvious way, I have not yet managed to clearly express all these links, the consequences of which are the subject of this book. These chapters will therefore be more of an impressionistic essay, in which I mention many aspects of our behaviour patterns related to the balance of power, which may give a fairly accurate general idea, but which in their formulation, i.e. the structure and chronology of the concepts discussed, are still presented in a somewhat disparate manner. These chapters are therefore likely to be modified in the future.
>
> Not having had the opportunity to discuss them with people who share my views, simply because I do not know any, it has been very difficult to produce the following content.
> However, despite my doubts, I am firmly convinced that the content is accurate, even if its formulation needs improvement.

3. Self-knowledge: our shadow side

a - Introduction

So far, we have talked about money, profit, consumption, society, and then our behaviour dictated by choices imbued with rationality and, finally, our perpetual recourse to the balance of power in our social interactions. All these elements are part of our very concrete and tangible reality.

In the following chapters, I will address the core of our inner reality to create a link between, on the one hand, the issues expressed above and the balance of power, and on the other hand, our mental and psychological configuration.
For if we truly want to act on external reality, without merely putting plasters on dysfunctions and without offering solutions that mirror the problem, it is at the level of our inner reality that we must invest ourselves.

The recourse to the balance of power is both cultural and innate. And its adoption at the cultural level is only the logical consequence of its innate use.

To be able to question the balance of power induced by culture, we must first be able to defuse the innate or conditioned part of ourselves that compels us to use them. All religions and other spiritual paths attempt to lead us there, but they have never prevented wars and abuses of all kinds. They advocate altruism, or submission to divine authority, or even both, but even so, they only partially succeed in defusing the part of us that brings us back to selfishness, to our primitive defensive attitudes, to gaining the upper hand, to surviving.

At the same time, capitalist culture as we know it today has strayed far from religion, without offering an alternative to the human evolution that religion partly enables. In our culture, we celebrate wealth, materialism, power, pleasure, ease, consumerism, and often addictive sexuality (a far cry from affection, partnership, respect, trust, and the function of reproduction).
Most individuals in the consumerist and profit-driven society in which we live simply no longer have any reference points for cultivating the altruism and solidarity that in the past managed to maintain a coherent, albeit rarely equitable, social fabric.
This coherence is increasingly crumbling. It is partly maintained by laws, which are ever more numerous and complex, yet still often unfair and insufficient.
Many humans currently behave a little like untrained pets that have been let off the leash and are creating chaos all around them. Abuses are cropping up everywhere, and the regulations designed to prevent them are always several steps behind.
I do not believe that laws or religions will succeed in bringing us back to a state of greater rightness, even though I do not deny their usefulness. We are simply called upon, and even forced, to evolve. Evolve in the psychological sense of the term.
Humans have passed the milestones of settling down, acquiring language, and then writing. They have developed science and technology, and are now getting bogged down because they are simply unable to manage what they have built. They have embarked on a mad rush of material evolution that they are no longer able to stop, even though they can see that the race is accelerating and heading straight to the wall.
The time has come to learn how to manage thoughts and emotions and break free from the balance of power, in order to allow our choices, decisions, and behaviours to align with the reasons of the heart.

And until we do the deep work of knowing and recognising our emotions, impulses, thoughts and behaviours, and become capable of managing them in a way that respects ourselves and those who share our lives, we will be unable to manage conflicts and disagreements outside of the balance of power.

For the balance of power is, in a way, the result of the situation that was created during an initial conflict or disagreement. To avoid or end a conflict, one of the two parties asserts its power, and the other party accepts this situation either totally or partially. This creates a kind of status quo that prevents any further progress. And once established, these games of dominance and subordination can last for years, decades, entire lifetimes, millennia. And yet none of these power games are constructive. They largely exclude good faith, honesty, flexibility, letting go, and evolution in relationships. They turn our lives into battles, into struggles to maintain our power, or to weaken that of our adversary, or, at the very least, to retain a few rights in order to survive, stay afloat, gain freedom or comfort - depending on the situation.

Many aspects come into play in power games. Apart from power relations that are part of a hierarchy and are provided for by law or accepted in education, other power relations could in some ways be considered abusive. In reality, they are currently considered normal, simply because we are relatively not conscious of them. Those who suffer from them understand the context of their situation better, at least much better than those who are responsible for it.

We agree to submit to a power imbalance either because we are forced to and are powerless to escape the situation, or because we derive secondary benefits from it. But more often than not, the secondary benefits are minor compared to the abuse we suffer. Or we delude ourselves about the secondary benefits. Secondary benefits, at the individual level, can be financial or emotional, for example. They may consist of avoiding loneliness, maintaining status, keeping a job, avoiding failure, protecting third parties, etc.

Power relations are more systematic in certain types of relationships. They are frequent or omnipresent in relationships between men and women, but are also very prevalent in patient-doctor relationships and in many liberal professions where, although the customer is the one who pays, they are by no means king in the transaction and must submit to the professional's injunctions. On the other hand, age, gender, religion, skin colour, culture, language, socio-professional status (i.e. salary and signs of wealth, profession, professional rank, level of education) are all social markers that will encourage the use of a form of domination or, conversely, engender forms of submission or rebellion.

Certain personality types, such as narcissistic perversion, are based on all the ambiguities of power relations. Equitable relationships are never possible with people built on this model.

When we become able to identify all these omnipresent power relations in our relationships, our environment, society and current events, and when we are conscious of the harmful consequences that most of them engender. When we become able to make the connections between all the dysfunctions that surround us at all levels and these same power relations, it forces us to ask questions. The only way to avoid feeling powerless in this situation is to understand that we have no control over 'changing others'. Our only potential in the face of this realisation lies in searching for that which, within ourselves, drives us to act within the framework of power relations.

So, in order to make the power relations in which we participate more visible, we first need to get to know ourselves better. And that requires taking a big step towards humility. We need to recognise that 95% of our behaviour is automatic and that our free will is therefore reduced to almost nothing, unless...
Unless we learn to refocus our attention on the present moment, learn to observe our conditioned, impulsive, unconscious reactions, and re-educate each of our neural connections in the direction of our intentions, deconditioning unwanted reactions and replacing them with chosen, constructive behaviours, which, over time, can become spontaneous and natural, just as our old behaviours once were. This is what we will discuss in the following chapters.

Hang on tight!

b - Balance of power versus empathy - the two sides of today's human being

i Ambivalence in behaviour

Many power dynamics originate from impulsive reactions, whether verbal or non-verbal, both for dominant behaviours and for behaviours of flight, rebellion or submission, or even the search for third-party help to regain power.

Before we can leave the power struggle behind, we need to look at the mental attitudes that cause us to use it so frequently.

This is because the human mind does not function in a linear fashion. It works a bit like our mind can blow hot or cold depending on our mood or circumstances.

The variability of our behaviour is part of our human nature. And we express it mainly in two quite opposing ways. Indeed, in some situations, we tend to be kind, respectful, generous and sensitive to others. In others, we will tend to do the opposite, allowing our conditioning and impulses – through our emotions, and sometimes through what we have learned – to blindly dictate our behaviour. This makes us selfish, demanding, blind to the distress of others and insatiably seeking pleasure, sometimes to the point of using others or harming them – consciously or unconsciously – in order to satisfy our desires.
Therefore, although we are all capable of empathy, we can never be sure that we will be able to maintain a benevolent attitude in all circumstances.

Another important factor that serves as a barometer for guiding our choices between more altruistic or more impulsive behaviours is determined by the boundary that each of us sets between those around us who can benefit from our benevolent behaviour and other people for whom we are not prepared to show empathy or even respect. indeed, for many people, one of the boundaries between benevolent and individualistic attitudes lies between family members and those outside the family, or even between a wider circle of acquaintances and strangers, or between people from our social milieu, or who share our culture, religion, language or physical appearance, and "others".

This indifference towards strangers, or "others", is used in concrete terms in journalism, for example, to judge the importance to be given to current events. Ten deaths in one's own country are more important than 100 or 1,000 deaths on the other side of the world. This is even referred to, in French, as *"la loi du mort-kilomètre" ou "loi de proximité" ('the law of the dead kilometre' or 'the law of proximity'*). [248]

And it is not limited to distance. Cultural and even ethnic identification also play a role. Deaths in the US, in journalistic terms as seen from Western Europe, are significantly more important than deaths in Africa or Asia. This is a form of racism that we have all unconsciously internalised and which illustrates the fact that strangers or people who are different or distant are entitled to much less interest and respect in our eyes.

The advent of screen-based communication also highlights the difference in the way we treat our interlocutors. In social networks, forums and other means of communication where we do not face our interlocutor directly, where we cannot see their face, or where communication is not live, the level of respect between people communicating can very quickly deteriorate. Relations of domination, bashing and harassment have become very common abuses on the internet, because awareness of the other person, through a screen, is very low, preventing empathy and encouraging a loss of control over impulses.

In other words, and to caricature (but not necessarily): we are capable of being lenient or making efforts for family, friends, sometimes colleagues, or more broadly, those we recognise as belonging roughly to our caste. Conversely, we attach much less importance to strangers who cross our path, to the point where we are sometimes completely indifferent to the fact that our attitude may inconvenience them. And if some of our comforts are manufactured by strangers on the other side of the world, who are treated like slaves, we simply do not want to know, as long as these comforts fall into our hands.

The extent of this indifference varies from one individual to another. For some, selfishness, lack of consideration, and even contempt are present even within the family. Conversely, for others, who are rarer and often influenced by a spiritual path or religion – and in this case, depending on their level of piety – kindness remains essential even towards strangers, foreigners, and even enemies.

And even within the same person, behaviour can vary over time depending on what they are going through, their level of stress, their current family or professional situation, their state of health, etc.
It is our environment, our education, the support we receive or do not receive from those around us, our past experiences, and our living conditions that shape us and determine our reactions to adversity, encouraging or discouraging benevolent behaviour or, conversely, predatory behaviour, or even a tendency towards submission and silence.

And regardless of how prevalent each of these attitudes is in our lives, when situations trigger emotions linked to past problems that have been resolved materially but not psychologically – something we are all familiar with – we will fall back into survival-type behaviours, and therefore, without the capacity for empathy, and generally without understanding why, because all of this originates at an unconscious level.

- Attitude towards strangers

In reality, when we meet strangers, we have no idea what their state of mind is, what their mentality is, how easily they get involved in power relationships, or, conversely, how altruistic they are.

In large urban areas (where the majority of the world's population lives), anonymity prevails in interactions between citizens. It is therefore difficult to establish relationships of trust between individuals, except within a fairly small closed circle.

Depending on our upbringing and our life context, which we perceive as either peaceful or insecure, mistrust and/or selfishness may or may not arise when faced with strangers, people we consider "different" and people we know relatively little about.

Attitudes of mistrust encourage us to withdraw into ourselves and defend our own interests first, i.e. relationships that take place within a framework of power struggles.

In these circumstances, in order to avoid the inappropriate use of aggression or abuse of power, each culture has created codes to protect relationships between individuals who do not know each other or know each other only slightly. Politeness, decorum and good manners make it possible to approach strangers while avoiding as many misunderstandings as possible and reassuring everyone of the apparent good faith of their interlocutor(s). This layer of codified behaviour helps to smooth the start of any relationship or any incidental and/or fleeting communication. It helps to reduce the number of slip-ups or conflicts.
The use of these codes can vary greatly depending on culture, personality, education and social background. Being around people who use the same code makes us feel much more comfortable. It is therefore much easier for most people to socialise with people from the same background.
Dominant, more extroverted, older people, or those who are more accustomed to travelling or frequenting very different environments, will show significantly more freedom and ease in their social behaviour towards strangers.
Conversely, people who are more shy, submissive, reserved, and/or accustomed to staying in a more restricted environment will find it much more difficult to meet people from different backgrounds and will be more inclined to want to protect themselves from them.
Children, teenagers and young people, on the other hand, may be more rebellious in their use of codes, as long as their experience has not shown them to be fully useful.

Currently, these codes have become much more relaxed. Obsequious people are becoming rare, and rudeness is becoming more common. Communication via email, text message and other digital means encourages us to abbreviate polite phrases. As the number of written messages has increased exponentially compared to the days of typewriters and carbon paper, it has become tedious to burden ourselves with phrases that prevent misunderstandings and smooth things over. We no longer greet each other, we no longer sign off, we express ourselves bluntly, as briefly as possible, without worrying too much about how the message might be perceived. And in exchanges, as we receive about as many messages as we send (on average, at least), we become accustomed to communicating in an increasingly abrupt manner, and this often spills over into oral communication. I should point out that "we" does not apply to everyone. There is also a growing trend in the opposite direction, of being sincerely more courteous to strangers, no doubt as a way of counteracting the lack of humanity that is becoming increasingly common on the streets, in shops, in government offices, etc.

As already mentioned, added to this is the fact that communicating with strangers through screens stimulates childish, sadistic and primitive behaviour, such as bashing, harassment, aggression, indifference, ignorance of others, machismo, etc. When facing a screen, we lose awareness that there is one or more persons we are communicating with, and the interlocutor becomes more like a doll or a toy on which to vent our feelings.

Conflicts and power games are therefore much more likely to arise.

And in direct contact, even when rules of propriety are maintained, these cannot always prevent irritation, disagreements and even conflicts.
Again, depending on their character, each person will react in a more abrupt or more subtle way. When faced with annoyance, before ostensibly showing irritation or even aggressiveness, some will be indulgent, others submissive, others will take the rules to extremes and become obsequious, others will engage in long discussions, or play the hypocrisy card, or even back down or let go without really paying attention to the situation.

And despite the masks, our emotions will often reveal our state of mind, and it will be our facial expressions, the tone of our voice, the direction of our gaze, our gestures and our posture that will speak for us. And this non-verbal language, emitted unconsciously, will be understood, also unconsciously, by the other person.

Open aggressiveness between strangers in direct contact is uncommon, but nevertheless not rare.

And when interactions are relatively fluid, politeness does not erase social barriers. Depending on individuals' professional roles, their level of wealth, their qualifications or ranks, but also their ethnic, religious and linguistic origins, power games will be more or less significant. Some have more interest than others in choosing flexibility or submission, while others, protected by their wealth, status, confidence or age, will consider it natural to be firm and demanding. On the professional side, bosses, shopkeepers, police officers, secretaries, doctors and hostesses, for example, each have very specific roles to play. Some will impose their authority, while others will find it in their interest to be persuasive or pleasant, and still others submissive. And when it comes to origins, although laws attempt to regulate our behaviour towards greater equality, our implicit culture still conveys a great deal of prejudice and leads to numerous forms of discrimination.

- Attitude towards those around us

Our close circle will often be spared from the mistrust, selfishness, or indifference that can manifest itself towards strangers, if emotional bonds exist and trust has been built. On the other hand, the rules of propriety will relax as relationships become closer or more intimate. And in these cases, even if there is

greater trust, in the event of conflict, the risk of aggressiveness and violence can quickly increase if we have not learned to manage our emotions. And for many people, even relationships with loved ones are characterised by frequent or constant rivalry, competition and power games. Judgement, social pressure, arguments, aggressiveness and even physical and psychological violence are commonplace in many families. This also exists in friendships and romantic relationships, as well as in certain professional environments.

Many power games are played between people who consider themselves equal and benevolent towards each other (friends, couples, siblings, colleagues of the same rank, etc.) because, on a psychological and unconscious level, this equality does not exist.

In fact, many relationships that appear friendly or courteous are in reality competitive, even if only partially. People measure themselves against their companions in life. Some do so through speech, others through physical performance, others through their level of aggressiveness, and still others through their humour. And the most common means, however, is often social status and signs of wealth, in order to appear better than others (fashion, physical appearance, tastes, interests, possessions, etc.).
In order to avoid conflict, judgement and misunderstanding, social pressure, marginalisation or ostracism, many people will adopt conformism while trying to raise their social status. This involves submitting to implicit rules in exchange for social integration that is not necessarily guaranteed or satisfactory.

It is also common for us to display different attitudes at almost the same time, depending on the person we are talking to and the type of relationship we have with them: kindness in private, tyranny at work, for example, or the reverse. Or depending on the person: harassment and violence in the family and seduction and altruism among friends.

- A switch in our heads and learning strategies to remedy this

As we have just seen, we do not react in the same way to strangers as we do to those around us, regardless of how large that circle may be. With strangers, we put on a polite facade that smooths interactions and can avoid most friction, or at least not let it show too much.

The emotion must therefore be strong enough to allow it to show in front of strangers, whereas we express our emotions much more easily in front of our loved ones, and in different ways depending on the social environment.

> Note: there are differences between men and women, for example, where men are still subject to an unspoken ban on crying, and women continue to face strong social pressure to restrain their anger.

And when our behaviours are subject to our negative emotions, we become more impulsive than thoughtful. The greater the emotion, the more the impulse takes over. And the better we know the person or people present, the more easily we lose control and give free rein to our emotions and the behaviour they generate. When we are caught up in turmoil, we lose some control over our intentions and almost all control over our will. In this sense, our attitudes will be much more automatic or reflexive; they will not be chosen calmly; they may fluctuate greatly over time; and they will much more rarely be adopted with a long-term perspective. This is because the unconscious goal will be to alleviate the suffering and urgency generated by the emotion of the moment: fear, anger, shame or guilt (for the most common ones).

When a situation triggers strong, negative emotions – and this varies from person to person – it is as if a switch has been flipped. Our brain switches to a different mode of operation. And this happens unconsciously.

And the repetition of similar situations can cause this mechanism to become automatic, which over time can become more complex as behavioural strategies are developed to calm the emotion.
And as long as we are not aware of both the mechanism and the strategies that have been developed to deal with it, we will not be able to change our reactions. Furthermore, education, experience and the influence of our social environment can lead us to use these strategies and turn them into behavioural habits, which we will use even in the absence of difficult emotions. Finally, having resources at our disposal, such as money, social status, knowledge, etc., will facilitate the use of these strategies. Manipulation and emotional blackmail are examples of behavioural strategies that are built on these emotions but which, over time, end up being used without the presence of these emotions. This is because the behaviour itself allows us to anticipate the arrival of the emotion and thus avoid it.

> Note: In the context of digital communication, there is an additional aspect. When we receive a message that unsettles, irritates or even attacks us, we do not always have the means to react immediately, or at least to be able to rectify the direction of communication immediately. Whereas in direct communication, this is instantaneous, allowing us to quickly avoid misunderstandings or smooth out a disagreement, and thus spare ourselves the difficult emotions associated with misunderstanding, miscommunication, worry, questioning, etc. This aspect often leads to unpleasant emotions being harboured for much longer, and to the development of harmful emotional automatisms over time.

Furthermore, in some cases, it is no longer our impulses that are the direct source of our aggressive, destructive or domineering attitudes, but rather our conditioning and learning that lead us there. In the army, for example, soldiers learn to manage their impulses, or rather to deny or hi der them, in the heat of battle, but they also learn to kill for their country, and to this end, training is provided to soldiers and officers. And many professions in our society are the result of learning to dominate, which, in some cases, will ultimately lead to situations of abuse of authority, mistreatment or even harassment, which will no longer be entirely, or even at all, dictated by our impulses, but rather by what we have learned. Being born male, for example, almost inevitably leads to adopting dominant behaviour towards women. In my opinion, this is entirely cultural and not hormonal, as we are still being led to believe, in an attempt to maintain everything that has always worked well for those who benefit from it.
Mansplaining, gallantry, interrupting speech, not giving women a chance to speak, presenting them with a fait accompli, etc. are examples of behaviours that are, on average, much more common among men towards women than they are among men, among women, or among women towards men. However, this is not innate, but learned, partly through education, but above all through mimicry, in a culture where all men practise these behaviours and where all women endure them without complaint, or rebel but to no avail. If this use of implicit power relations were truly natural, men would practise them much more among themselves, but this is clearly not the case, as anyone can observe.

The fact remains that, when faced with adversity, when we find ourselves in situations that trigger (or threaten to trigger) our emotional reflexes, mainly in the form of fear and anger, we will adopt selfish attitudes that consist of trying to exercise power over others, or conversely, if we do not have power, of remaining submissive and obeying blindly like sheep without asking ourselves questions.

We can call this our shadow side.

We are all affected in one way or another by this dual mode of functioning – altruism/selfishness – but each to a different degree, depending on our living conditions.

And this ambivalence that characterises us works like a switch: light - darkness. We function on a healthier basis as long as nothing triggers our more primitive reactions. We are then in the light, sometimes in the half-light/twilight, but we are not blinded by our reactions, which control us and our will.

And as soon as the switch is flipped, we lose a great deal of control (even if we deny it), and all our relationships with reality become based on power games: dominant or dominated. As long as we are not aware that such a switch exists in our minds, which puts our cortical functions at the service of our emotional brain; as long as this awareness is not awakened, we will be powerless to change things around us. And it is fundamental to understand this. For it is the impact of this aspect, which we all experience, that is at the root of almost all the dysfunctions in our societies and which now makes it possible for the human species to destroy itself.

Whenever we try to solve a problem and a balance of power, induced by our emotions or conditioning, is at work, we run a very high risk of choosing an inappropriate or temporary solution, which will force us to reconsider the problem later on; this delays real solutions and maintains the balance of power. And this very often has harmful consequences, either for the people affected by the problem or elsewhere. Regardless of the origin of the balance of power.

And everyone is affected, at all levels. In this sense, until we all develop the ability to manage our overwhelming emotions and become aware of our conditioning – in order to adopt other types of behaviour that exclude the balance of power – we will repeat history. And repeating history condemns us in the medium term.

Thus, each of us' humanity is always potentially at risk when certain circumstances are likely to trigger our survival instincts and defensive attitudes.
The fundamental difference that can impact as much our individual lives, as our collective life and life on the planet, lies in our awareness of the existence of this switch. And this awareness will generate a new ability to observe what happens when the light has been turned off, or, to put it another way, when the glass of water and mud has been shaken. And little by little, this training will enable us, over time, to acquire the ability to calm things down in these moments by refusing to take action. This is a radical shift in our conception of our individuality, our reality, and our power over life, in which many of our reference points are reversed.

Becoming able to keep the switch on the light, as stable as possible, gives us enormous power over our actions on both our inner and outer reality, without exercising a domination power over others, and without being subject to theirs. And this in itself allows us to shine much further than we can imagine. It is the transformation of the caterpillar into a butterfly. Our way of functioning is completely different once we have travelled this path.

ii The tipping point

Let's take a look at what happens when an emotion drags us into negativity and short-circuits the kindliness and the good will of our behaviour.
When a critical situation arises with one or more interlocutors: annoyance, irritation, conflict, misunderstanding, disagreement; our reaction will vary according to the type of relationship we have with them, but also according to the social status of each of the protagonists, as well as each person's propensity to act in terms of domination, submission, rebellion, victimisation, or cooperation.

- When dealing with strangers

When we do not know the people we are dealing with and a disagreement arises, we will generally avoid aggressiveness, but not necessarily the balance of power. The use of politeness, obsequiousness, and even hypocrisy at times can help us to overcome a disagreement or conflict that arises, by attempting to maintain communication, or even to cooperate and show indulgence.

But these attitudes can also be accompanied by non-verbal reactions that contradict these codes, which can manifest themselves in tone of voice, speech rate, choice of words, facial expressions and gestures, revealing annoyance, impatience, condescension, denial, indifference, or a desire to exercise authority. The protagonists will only be partially aware of this, but it will nevertheless define the relationship between the people involved.

And the more this non-verbal aspect is played out unconsciously, the more the power games involved in the interaction will enter the realm of manipulation. Those who are most skilled in this area can appear affable and kind, while exercising power over the other person without them being truly aware of it. This consists of exercising power over a person while managing to avoid conflict and ensuring that the other person does not feel submissive.

Conflicts between strangers are mostly minor and temporary. They can be avoided or circumvented through politeness and rarely escalate to aggression.
If these conflicts prove to be more significant and/or long-lasting, they are generally resolved through the intervention of a third party: the police, an authoritative institution or association, mediation, or the courts.

- Facing those around us

Conversely, when one knows better the person with whom a situation is playing out which arouses annoyances, the facade protection exerted by the codes of politeness between strangers is generally no longer applicable, and will no longer be able to protect against potential open aggressiveness.

Everyone will react differently. In the private sphere, when the doors are closed, anything can happen. When the conflict is intense and repeated, aggressiveness can be manifested verbally and/or physically. But this is not universal, as some people have learned to communicate, manage their emotions and impulses, measure their words, and thus avoid violence in relationships most of the time and overcome conflicts.

But education is not everything. In certain circumstances, memories of our past experiences can be suddenly rekindled by events in the present, causing us to revert to much more instinctive behaviours where we lose control. Some people are constantly immersed in these atmospheres. Others are virtually unaware of their existence.

And apart from open conflicts, there can be a multitude of small frictions created by the repetition of daily life, leading to more implicit power struggles, where games of domination, submission, revenge and escape become permanently established. We can also see scenarios involving several people, where, for example, the boss imposes his diktat on his employee, who submits to it and in turn exercises power over his wife at home, who then passes it on to the children.

iii We cannot disinvest our so-called "negative" thoughts and emotions solely through the simple choice of thinking positively

To better manage the mental "switch" that causes us to swing into emotions and leads to more impulsive survival behaviours and power struggles, it is useful not only to be aware of it, but also to know how to avoid and overcome this process. And I think it is a mistake to believe that investing ourselves totally in a positive direction will magically erase everything we still experience in a negative way. Part of this approach is indeed correct. It is generally not necessary to look to the past in order to heal. On the other hand, it is essential to recognise the conditioning and effects of the past on the present, so as not to keep them active. And that requires getting your hands dirty. It means experiencing these effects of the past in

the present, looking them squarely in the face and acknowledging them, but without investing in them any more, without giving them any more importance in our present choices and attitudes, without believing in them any more. It is a choice, a choice we make every moment. Because not looking them in the face means giving them control over our lives.

iv Discovering the effects of the switch

As mentioned above, most of our thoughts are automatic, despite our belief that we manage them all. And our emotions are often unconscious, and we have generally not learned to manage them, even if we claim to have done so. We are often able to silence or ignore them, which is quite different from being able to manage them.
When faced with situations or events that arouse painful emotions (fear, anger, shame, guilt, sadness, etc.), our usual tendency is to want to act to make them go away, or at least stop thinking about them. And this attitude makes us incapable of managing these same emotions. However, when we learn to face and work through an unpleasant emotion, consciously identifying it but without feeding it with thoughts, it eventually calms down and we begin to learn to live better with it when it arises, rather than trying to escape, deny, control or suppress it. Because an emotion that we suppress will impose itself even more on our mind, taking our thoughts hostage, which in turn will feed it. And this will ruin our lives by distorting our perception of reality. And if we manage to silence this emotion, it is likely to reappear in a more insidious way.

Conversely, an emotion that is accepted will eventually be appeased, allowing us to manage it better in the future because we will be less afraid of it.

This requires being truly present when the storm threatens, in order to spot it. It is a matter of learning to perceive the emotion when it arises, or even detecting the thoughts that can cause it to arise, so that we are able to avoid investing in them automatically, without denying them. This then enables us to choose to invest our thoughts in the positive, rather than allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by negative thoughts without having made that choice.

But before we can engage in constructive, positive attitudes, it is essential to be aware of our tendency to systematically or automatically fall back into opposite attitudes, linked to reflex reactions triggered in certain circumstances. This requires knowing each of them and being able to recognise them when they impose themselves on us. This is not easy, because we are then generally caught in mental spirals that can lead us in the opposite direction to our usual intentions. And if we ignore these mechanisms, if we are not prepared to react to them, they will, in a way, hijack our will, just as when we are caught up in a stressful situation and do not even think of taking the time to relax in order to get through it more calmly. When the switch is flipped, our limbic brain (the emotional brain) takes our cortex hostage and distorts all our reasoning until the emotion has subsided and we can regain the rightness of our reasonings. This is because reasoning induced by emotion is coloured by it and, at the time, appears to be the most indisputable truth, when in fact it is nothing more than a mirage. And over time, when a certain type of emotion tends to recur frequently, we develop mental strategies to avoid experiencing that emotion. These strategies are triggered by the emotional brain as soon as an event occurs that is likely to arouse the emotion we want to avoid. We may then, without being affected by the emotion, become caught up in reasoning and behaviours that do not really correspond to who we are, but which we are unable to prevent: it is stronger than us. And very often, we will regret them afterwards. Most of the time, these strategies become a habit that we no longer question, without realising that we have not chosen them.
It is only by bringing all this to light that we can regain a form of freedom in our choices of how to think and function.

And this learning process requires vigilance over time. We can never completely let our guard down, even if, over time, the return to negative reflexes will become increasingly rare and less and less intense. Our awareness must therefore be maintained over time, because ignoring it means allowing ourselves to fall back into our old ways at the first opportunity. In the same way that when we overcome an addiction, we can never take our recovery for granted.

And while the first step – discovering these mechanisms – is essential, over time it will take up less and less of time and energy in our thoughts, because the main mental investment is in training ourselves toward positive conditionings. And like any learning process, this is done step by step, extremely slowly and with greater difficulty at the beginning, becoming increasingly automatic, easy and rapid thereafter.

What is essential to understand is the similar aspect to addiction. Denying the possibility of a return to negative reactions is tantamount to opening the door wide for their return.

Exalted attitudes, consisting of preaching love, love, love for one's neighbour as if we were saints, then reveal themselves to be extremely naive.

v Learning to manage the switch

We do not have to unconsciously suffer our emotions and thoughts that distance us from our intentions and plans, nor do we have to feel like victims. For there are ways to escape these mechanisms that imprison us against our will in what does not suit us and that kidnap our consciousness towards choices and behaviours that harm us and others.

To learn how to manage the switch, we must first understand the mechanism at work, and then we must learn to become able to recognise it when an emotion is triggered. Finally, we can learn to welcome the emotion, to go through it, without believing the thoughts it imposes on us and without letting it dictate our behaviour.

Dr Ashok Gupta proposes a video programme, to cure chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and many other similar syndromes [249] - [see Ref 24]. In this programme, he clearly explains the brain processes involved and suggests certain techniques that can help with this learning process.

When thoughts and emotions arise that are harmful to us, he recommends first identifying the path that they will lead us to take (illness and ill-being in the case of people whose health is compromised). He then proposes a technique that allows us to stop the process and consciously choose to take another path, the path that leads to healing and well-being. It is the awareness that another path is possible, and learning to align our thoughts and emotions with this new path, that truly enables healing.

We can use the same reasoning when faced with our tendency to fall into automatic and unwanted emotions and thoughts that lead to power-struggle behaviour, so that we can learn to identify them, stop them, and choose the other path, that of altruism and the heart.

This concept of dual paths, which the Gupta programme makes more tangible, is fundamental. In order to change our perspective and become capable of diverting our thoughts and emotions away from the path of suffering or survival, enabling us to opt for more appropriate thoughts and behaviours, it is necessary to observe ourselves and become aware of the negative or harmful context in which we find ourselves. Without this awareness, it is impossible to choose to go elsewhere and thus to change direction.

Part of the process therefore consists of observing our automatic responses as they are triggered, and getting through this difficult passage through inaction and presence. We then find ourselves in the

situation of the glass of water where the mud has been shaken up. And the best we can do then is to learn to observe again and again until the mud settles at the bottom of the glass (meditation and energy psychology techniques can also help and make this decantation process almost instantaneous). And only then, when the water becomes clear again, will these effects of the past (difficult emotions and the thoughts they generate) dissolve and disappear, giving way to clarity and lucidity, allowing us to see beyond the walls of the glass. But until thoughts and emotions have calmed down, it will take courage and effort to endure them without investing in them.

Another aspect that helps us to better understand and manage the inappropriate emotions that can overwhelm or harass us is breath control. Breathing and the smile that can accompany it can bring the body back to a more peaceful state (activating the ventral branch of the vagus nerve), defuse invasive negative thoughts, and dissolve the emotions that accompany them.

As Stéphanie Brillant says in her book, *"L'incroyable pouvoir du souffle"* (The Incredible Power of Breathing) (2021), Ed. Actes Sud:

> *"Every emotion is just, and it is normal to go through it. Breathing helps this movement without us remaining stuck forever in one or other of these feelings. Some emotions, however, hinder us. Anger, for example, serves no purpose in the long term. It can serve as a personal wake-up call, but it is more likely to paralyse us, block us in a misguided view of a situation and shut us in by throwing us off balance, distracting us from ourselves. We are designed for balance; imbalance teaches us to regain stability."*
>
> *...*
>
> *"Emotion must be temporary, otherwise it is no longer an emotion but a state."*
>
> *...*
>
> *"When we are entangled in a negative state, emotion is not useful to us, since it does not set us in motion, and in this case, the breath is a saviour, a way out. It will bring clarity when the invasion becomes too great, if fear becomes obsessive and no longer nourishes life, if pain overwhelms us."*
>
> *...*
>
> *"Breathing is the access key to our ability to manage our existence."* [250]

Most guided meditations focus particularly on the body, and most often on breathing, slowing it down, deepening it and calming it, without ever forcing anything, in order to calm the mind and focus attention on the body, on feelings, and on the present moment.
In her book, Stéphanie Brillant also explains that controlled, practised breathing can heal, or rather support and accelerate the healing of many pathologies and sufferings, such as stress, post-traumatic stress, all kinds of pain, but also asthma, sleep disorders, anxiety, depression and many others.

Another interesting technique is the rubber band technique. It can be used for the same purpose, to defuse negative thoughts and emotions.

It reminds me to the Ashok Gupta technique mentioned above. I do not know the origin of this technique, but there are several videos about it on the internet. It involves wearing a rubber band on your wrist and snapping it every time you have a negative thought or experience an unnecessary painful emotion. In general, a thought leads to an emotion, and vice versa, so this technique helps to manage the thought/emotion pairing.

To be more specific, I include the following in negative thoughts:

- all thoughts that cause harm: and that very often lead us to painful emotions for no reason (fear, sadness, anger, shame, guilt, doubts, etc.);
- but also those that judge ourselves or others negatively (criticism, denigration, blame) and that push us to always point the finger at others while absolving ourselves of our responsibilities and feeding denial;
- thoughts that fuel our aggressiveness, resentment, hatred or indifference;
- those that cause stress and rumination, preventing us from escaping this harmful mental climate, which itself is the breeding ground for even more negative thoughts in the future.

The snap of the elastic band, if it is made of rubber, is unpleasant without being too painful. The repetition of this pain will condition us to want to avoid it. It is important, at the same time, to mentally express the desire to stop this type of thinking each time we snap the elastic band. A loud "STOP" expressed mentally will send a clear message to the brain in parallel with the pain. It is therefore a question of creating a Pavlovian reflex on ourselves, through our own will, to learn to avoid entering or remaining in automatic patterns of thoughts and/or emotions that are harmful to us.
The use of a physical stimulus that causes a fleeting pain, at the same time as the negative thought, will condition our mind, and therefore our neurological system, to effectively abandon this type of functioning that keeps us stuck in what prevents us from moving towards what we really desire. This is because the pain will be encoded in our biology and will be directly linked to this type of thought and emotion at the neuronal level. This technique will induce avoidance conditioning. With practice, this avoidance can then become spontaneous without having to pay attention to it. Such thoughts and emotions will begin to occur less and less frequently and then disappear altogether. The process is relatively quick.
And as this can apply to many different types of harmful thoughts, it is best to always wear this elastic band. Learning takes place gradually as we become more aware of each type of thought in question. Starting the process is like setting a chain reaction in motion, because awareness of one form of harmful thought or emotion will lead to the discovery of another similar or related thought or emotion that is just as harmful, and these can then be dealt with one after the other.

At first, the game will consist more of detecting these thoughts and emotions as they arise, and since this awareness does not appear immediately, you will not snap the elastic band very often. Then, for each type of thought, it will take a few days to reduce it.

And so we discover that we can realise our potential to think positively, more and more; whereas efforts in this direction had previously proved rather vain. And this can be explained by the fact that as long as we are immersed in our negative thoughts, looking at the glass as half empty without even realising it, it is completely impossible for us to see it as half full and fill it up. No matter how good our intentions are, and how intense they may be, our conditioning will catch up with us, and no matter how much we lament it and invest in our positive side, it will not be enough until the negative conditioning has been removed.

And this is perfectly logical, because if our brain is saturated with negative thoughts, there is no room for positive thoughts. Until we clear the ground, we will not be able to grow anything satisfying or beneficial. Because every positive thought we try to sow in this negative mental environment will be instantly drowned out.
There is no point in seeking information, training in, or practising positive thinking as long as we remain overwhelmed by unconscious negative thought patterns. And this is something that is really difficult to understand – at least on a personal level – as long as we are constantly immersed in negative thoughts.

David Lefrançois, who explains the elastic technique in a slightly different context, offers the following metaphor:

> *"If you put great software on a computer that is full of viruses, your software won't work for long. Now, if you remove all the viruses, do a big reset, and reinstall the right software, you'll see that it*

will work on its own, it will be effective, and you won't have any latency, you'll get the response you want. In short, it will work." [251]

vi Managing the switch over time

The choice to think and act in a more virtuous manner cannot work solely through the will to do so. It is imperative to never lose sight of any potential mental and emotional storm or strategy – activation of the switch – that may seize us along the way and lead us to make decisions or take actions that will bring us back to square one. Even if it is a storm in a glass of water, it will blind us to the reality beyond the glass.

And it is difficult to understand this necessity to never take our learning for granted. Because, while in reality we will be able to invest more and more of ourselves (both in terms of time and in terms of the concerns that matter most to us in our thoughts) in a positive, constructive direction, we must always cultivate an attitude of alertness. And it is this attitude that will guarantee our progress and its stability. For without it, we are deluding ourselves, living a lie. Being alert to our demons does not mean investing in them, but rather watching over them as they sleep, to be sure we do not listen to them if they wake up.

This learning process forces us, in a way, to leave behind the carefree nature of our childhood and our confidence in our certainties. And if it is truly done consciously, it will not compromise our spontaneity, our impetus or our passions. For it does not consist of turning us into 'doing good' machines.

On the contrary, it leads us to discover true free will and, in its wake, to show greater consistency, integrity and authenticity.

vii Accepting our shadow side means accepting that of others

Knowing and accepting our shadow side, and in a way, the effects of the past on our present character, also means accepting ourselves as we are without trying to hide our flaws. Without this acceptance, we will remain judgemental of others and will not be able to allow our true positive tendencies to flourish - see also my article on this subject: *"The qualities of our defects"* [252] - [see Ref I].
This is another aspect that religions and other spiritual movements too often tend to neglect. In a way, if we ignore our own flaws, we will not be able to learn to love our neighbour by accepting them with their flaws. And the more we accept to confront all our own negative aspects, without fighting them, the more altruism, empathy, and indulgence emerge naturally, with a new strength that comes from experience and understanding of what we are going through, and this is what transforms us and, moreover, allows our self-confidence to grow.

Being able to see the beam in our own eye reduces it to a speck and allows us to stop being so bothered by the speck in our neighbour's eye. Ignoring this aspect, however, causes us to stumble over all our neighbours' specks, blinded as we are by our own because we fail to pay attention to it.

c - Capitalism exploits our dark side

As long as we remain beings who listen to our impulses to exercise power over others, even if it means resorting to physical or psychological violence, or as long as we remain submissive and obedient beings, we will be unable to let go of power games in all their manifestations.

And this is what capitalist society exploits in an extraordinary way.

Capitalism, the pursuit of growth, money that grows on its own, the existence of the stock market, the deportation of migrants to their countries of origin, tax evasion, austerity policies, the acceptance that the richest hold what could lift the poorest out of poverty, rampant consumerism, all our addictions, planned obsolescence, and of course all wars; these are all processes, among many others, that stem directly from the use of power relations. The disappearance of these power relations would automatically render obsolete all those aspects of our societies that have become habitual to us and yet are dysfunctional, harmful, or destructive.

In the same way, violence, submission, manipulation, lying... to name but a few, are all behaviours that are linked to the darker aspects of our personalities, and which we all display on a daily basis. However, in the absence of power relations, they no longer have any reason to exist and could more easily disappear from our mentalities.

Until we become aware of the emotions that govern us and control part of our behaviour, we will remain incapable, on an individual level, of conceiving of relationships outside the realm of power games. Yet behind every aberration in our society lies a balance of power.

If new paths towards a more just society are still in an embryonic stage, or largely inapplicable, it is because too much of our reasoning, for most humans, still operates on the level of our most primitive behaviours.

And this is probably one of the main reasons why many innovations fail to take hold and why we continue to repeat old patterns, trying to look to the past so as not to repeat it, but without success. This notion was mentioned earlier in the text.

Until we understand this, we will continue to maintain as such the situations with abuses, or resolve them with new abuses.

And it will certainly not be those in power or the wealthiest individuals who will be best placed to lead us down new paths capable of steering us out of the chaos that lies ahead. They will only be capable of resisting any will for change on the part of citizens or, at best, following citizen transition movements if these prove to have a sufficient impact.

Because the 'people in power' (political, economic and financial) are precisely those who, more often than not, are most attached to power relations, by the very nature of their position. And therefore, with a few exceptions – because there are some – they will be among the last to be able to abandon these patterns of dominant behaviour. Following this logic, asking them to pursue a different policy is more likely to push them into a corner than to support them in achieving the desired objectives. This may also partly explain the inability of public officials to implement new policies, regardless of the pressure exerted by the population.

And for those at the top of the social pyramid in particular, their dark shadow is overdeveloped. It is not that they are so much victims of their impulses, because at their level, they have built a whole personality based on greed, habituation to privilege and strategies to maintain their status. It is therefore their predatory side that tends to prevail. This develops gradually, and few are spared. Despite their attachment to propriety, they often have very little regard for those who do not share their privileges, and in general for all those who depend on their power. Yet it is they who make most of the decisions and set the direction for society.

This raises the question for those who live comfortably, who have left behind a situation of survival: when you pay for an item or service, do you sometimes find yourself being demanding and uncompromising,

even to the point of being aggressive, contemptuous, or overly critical of the seller, producer, or service provider, and thus adopting an attitude of domination, simply because you are the one with the money?
If this has happened to you, even once, it is quite easy to understand that when you have a lot of money, the opportunities to adopt such an attitude multiply. And when money flows freely, if you are not careful, it becomes customary and empathy and altruism eventually disappear.

d - The dark shadow and the role of citizens in transition

It will therefore be up to citizens to bring about the transition. A significant minority of the population, who are not in a situation of survival, are already practising or learning to practise consciously different types of behaviour, i.e. more empathetic or supportive, even in more threatening situations. This section of the population is becoming capable of consciously choosing to practise only these types of behaviour. And this is where the alternative to a fairer and simply more viable society lies.

The more we become aware of what we are immersed in and the effect it has on us, the more we are able to choose other paths in our daily lives. This is a voluntary act that replaces automatic responses.

This little Cherokee tale illustrates this point:

The wolf you feed

One evening an old Cherokee Indian told his grandson
about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, 'My son, the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all.
One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance,
self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness,
benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.'

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather:
'Which wolf wins?'

The old Cherokee simply replied,
'The one you feed.'

It is therefore in our interest to learn, or relearn, how to give direction to our behaviour. This choice requires us to first become aware of the behaviours we use out of habit, automatically or reflexively. And it is not simply a choice in one direction or another, but rather an ability to remain conscious, that is, present to our ability to choose, when our thoughts and emotions impose the opposite on us and prevent us from having control over our attitudes and behaviours.

e - The dark shadow and the role of crises

Major crisis situations are likely to cause upheaval in those who experience them. No work of awareness is then required. The awakening is instantaneous. But depending on the severity of the crisis and its duration, this awakening may prove to be only temporary. However, even if temporary, it facilitates subsequent awareness.

The generations who lived through the 1940-45 war have repeatedly told younger generations: 'You haven't experienced war'. When you have experienced a major social crisis such as this, you cannot completely return to the mentality that prevailed just before.

The Covid crisis has profoundly shaken our mentalities, but only temporarily. However, major unpredictable events will continue to occur and will guide us along the way, through suffering once again, if necessary. The war in Ukraine and the resulting famines, the energy crisis, the increasing number of climate disasters, and what we have not yet seen coming can only push us all in the same direction, with a few exceptions.

f - Factors that may or may not encourage the balance of power

There are many factors that will define our approach to the balance of power: mainly physical and psychological factors linked to our past, our present situation, and our level of consciousness. These factors vary greatly from one person to another. They influence the extent to which events affect us, and therefore how quickly we enter into a power struggle, how calmly we resist it, or how strongly we cling to it. This is because the choice of one mode of operation over another is rarely fully conscious.

And, on a broader level, we can really outline two fundamental tendencies, two relatively antagonistic mindsets that we are all familiar with. The first mindset favours choosing the balance of power. The second mindset will open us up to other ways of solving our problems. In a way, in the first mindset, the switch is in standby mode, while in the second, it is much more difficult to trigger.

And it is not just the use of the balance of power that is at stake; for this mindset influences our perceptions of reality in the present, our resulting mental attitudes, and therefore the behaviours we choose to adopt in response to our perceptions of reality. Before detailing the factors that influence the use the balance of power, here is a list of some characteristics that describe the state of mind in which the balance of power is or is not used, in order to get an idea of the difference between the two perspectives. The first state of mind encourages us to resort to force, and the second protects us from it:

- *our weakness,* **or our strength** (whether mental, physical or psychological),
- *our stress,* **or our serenity,**
- *our aggressiveness and even violence,* **or our placidity and indulgence,**
- *our feelings of insecurity,* **or our confidence in ourselves, in others and in life**
- *our withdrawal into ourselves,* **or our tendency towards adventure,**
- *our intolerance and closed-mindedness,* **or our flexibility and openness,**
- *our compulsive behaviours,* **or self-control,**
- *our tendency towards selfishness, individualism, indifference to the suffering of others,* **or our tendency towards empathy, cooperation, solidarity,**
- *our negative thoughts,* **or our positive thoughts,**

- *our propensity to be a "pain in the neck", to have a serious or even sullen face,* **or our ability to smile, to be radiant, and our charisma,**
- *our tendency to criticise, judge, complain,* **, or conversely, to appreciate, compliment, rejoice,**
- *our bad tempered* **or cheerful mood,**
- *our tendency to ruminate, to remain obsessed with our concerns, unable to let go,* **or our ease of getting through worrying events without paying too much attention to them, or our ease of daydreaming.**

Some people live most of their lives in the most positive state of mind, while others live much more often in the other, much less pleasant and constructive state of mind. And we all go through periods of varying lengths in one or the other tendency. When these tendencies become engrained over time, they shape our personality, and we could define them as a darker temperament and a brighter temperament. But we must never forget that these are tendencies, which can therefore be reversed, and that nothing is ever definitive, except sometimes with age, when automatic responses take over from the will, when the wounds accumulated over time have frozen some of our reactions, and when negativity almost always prevails.

And although we may exhibit characteristics of both states of mind at the same time, at any given moment we are generally clearly leaning towards one or the other. The best lesson we can learn is to try to maintain the tendency towards openness more and more often, and therefore also to be aware when we find ourselves in the other state of mind, and to try to leave it as quickly as possible.

These two relatively opposite tendencies depend much less on our willpower and basic personality than on the state of our body, our neurons and our automatic responses.
There is no point in having a thousand sessions with a psychologist if, on a biological level, these attitudes remain ingrained in our bodies.

All of this can be linked to Stephen Porges' polyvagal theory. For more information on this subject, see the appendix. I will refer to this theory several times in the rest of the book.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of criteria that will influence us to favour one tendency or another, and therefore encourage us to use the balance of power or prevent us from doing so. It is impossible to be exhaustive, as this concerns all kinds of areas. But I will try to outline a few key points.

i First of all, our past largely shapes who we are: our temperament, our conditioning, our wounds, our tendencies.

These factors define us to a large extent, and we generally have relatively little control over them if we are not aware of them, if we deny them, and if we do not seek to make them evolve.

- First, our **conditionings**, learned through our education or integrated through our experiences, may or may not facilitate the use of power relations. It will lead us to a tendency to react, based on the past, depending on the repetition of certain living conditions or certain types of events over time. Authoritarian parenting methods, parents who argue frequently, sibling jealousy, being bullied at school, participating in sports where competition is the norm, living in an environment where status, degrees, or fashion are essential references... There are thousands of examples that can shape us – or not – towards

comparison, competition, submission, defensiveness, paternalism, and all other aspects of power relations.

- And among these conditioning factors, **socio-cultural factors**, i.e. our culture, gender, religion and age, will all influence our behaviour in a more general way, but will lead us to favour power relations or, conversely, altruism. Gender will lead us towards male domination or female submission. Our religion may lead us to cultivate a more generous relationship with others, but sometimes also a more violent one in certain countries (religious wars) or in certain extremist movements (terrorism, rigid religious rules, etc.). Our culture can lead us towards racism, a culture of competition, a culture of consumption, etc. As for age, it can lead to better management of impulses, a greater ability to compromise, a certain wisdom at times, but sometimes also to a lot of negativity and resentment, depending on each person's experiences over the years.

- In terms of our personal experience, if we have suffered a lot of **emotional shocks and wounds** in our lives, and these have never really healed, they will continue to remind us indirectly and unconsciously, instantly projecting us – in a situation that triggers their reawakening – into the same types of impulsive, defensive or powerless behaviour as when we suffered the initial shock or wound. And more often than not, this happens when the present situation has practically nothing to do with the past situation, except for a small element of similarity, and we are completely unaware of what is going on in our brains.

ii Further, it is our current situation that will also determine our reactions to adversity.

We only have partial control over the present, because our freedom depends not only on our past, as we have just seen, but also on certain rules: on the one hand, those related to laws and working conditions, which are explicit; and on the other hand, those that are generally much more vague and implicit in the private sphere. Outside of these rules, we can make choices and thus change our present.

- If our living conditions are closer to **survival**, the behavioural tendency that will most often be favoured will depend on our instincts, reflexes and conditionings. This is therefore imposed on us. Our behaviours will be more selfish and sometimes more cruel. We will then act like the lion that kills the gazelle to feed itself and ensure the survival of its family. Under these conditions, it is almost impossible to nurture our tendencies towards altruism, generosity and empathy.

  Conversely, if we live in **opulence, well-being and success**, we will be better able to show ourselves in a better light. To return to the comparison with the animal world: this is the case where, at the risk of their own lives, individuals of certain species are capable of saving other animals of a species that they usually attack, simply because they are able – when they are not in danger or starving – to put their instincts (drives) aside for the good of others.

  However, beyond a certain level of wealth, the situation can reverse again, because the risk is to become predatory and thus become accustomed to exploiting power games for our own benefit, simply because money allows us to do so.

  Another very important factor is **the physiological aspects**. Our tendencies to dominate or submit, to fight, flee or accept are much more closely linked to our health and lifestyle than we generally believe. Here are a few examples:

  - breathing and the diaphragm: if breathing is not deep (flexibility or blockage of the diaphragm), if it is not fluid (congested airways) and if it is mainly upper chest breathing (when we

inflate the chest more than the stomach); this has an impact on many bodily functions, particularly the ability to de-stress and let go. And it works the other way around too: working on our breathing will help us relax. Our state of mind can change completely if we do breathing exercises that increase the depth and slow down the frequency of our breath. And this influences how we react to events and our openness towards others.

• Nutrition, particularly sugar and junk food: Food can be an indirect vector of violence. [253] Sugar, for example, can promote stress and aggressiveness. This is being studied more and more, including in schools where pupils' behaviour has been compared depending on whether they were given a normal diet (junk food) or a balanced diet. Food hygiene can have a significant impact on our brain, partly because the gut is our second brain, and partly because the contents of our digestive tract become the contents of our cells. The richer our cells are nourished (in terms of quality), the better our reactions will be.

• Sleep quality: sleeping in noisy or bright conditions, on a poor-quality mattress, in excessive heat or cold, or not getting enough sleep, inevitably damages our health in the long term and leads not only to fatigue, but also to a greater tendency to experience stress, reactivity to negative events, and therefore aggressiveness and depression.

• Physical exercise: This is better known, physical exercise helps to relieve stress, in addition to all the other health benefits it generates, and it slows down ageing. Movement affects the state of our body, but also the production of certain hormones, detoxification, the quality of intestinal transit, etc. Once again, these factors can influence us to move towards or away from the balance of power.

• Dental occlusion: this is much less well known, but poor dental occlusion (which can be caused by even a slight imbalance in the shape or placement of the teeth) is a major cause of stress. The jaws are extremely powerful, and when we clench our teeth, if the force is concentrated on a very small contact surface between the teeth, it affects the entire functioning of the body, mainly by weakening it. Rebalancing the occlusion not only eliminates fatigue, but also brings about a huge sense of release, as we stop "clenching our teeth" day and night, so to speak. Clenching your teeth means being constantly on the alert, and therefore in a state of mental survival.

Dental treatments accumulate in many people as they age, and in many cases result in the deterioration of dental occlusion. Quite simply, dentists who treat cavities drill into the tooth and then place a dental filling on the destroyed part of the tooth, restoring the volume of the tooth, but rarely in a way that is similar to what it was before. This can instantly disrupt the dental occlusion. The use of small pieces of carbon paper to check dental occlusion once treatment is complete is far from being a perfect way to eliminate an imbalance in the contact between the teeth of the two jaws. This is all the more so because this small exercise is performed in a position that is not a normal position for our head and body. The occlusion of the teeth is different in each position of our head and body. Whether the body is standing, sitting, lying on its back, side or stomach, it will position the jaws differently for each orientation. However, the small piece of carbon paper only tests the occlusion in a semi-reclining position, which excludes all others. In addition, our posture, habits, and all kinds of other factors in life will cause this occlusion to change over time. So, once again, it is as we age that these aspects become apparent. Thus, the state of our dental occlusion can not only influence our stress and fatigue levels, but also, more broadly, our health and mood.

• Smiling is a little-known aspect that influences our state of mind. It is much more difficult to think negatively when we smile, even when it is a forced smile. The very act of smiling, although it

contracts the muscles of the face, has a relaxing effect. There is a decontraction, and we loosen our teeth. Smiling also triggers the release of endorphins (the pleasure hormone), dopamine (the motivation and feeling of pleasure hormone) and serotonin (the hormone that prevents depression). Conversely, it inhibits the production of cortisol (the stress hormone). Smiling also stimulates the immune system and reduces blood pressure in stressful situations. In other words, smiling makes us more positive, even when we have no reason to smile.

What's more, smiling, if it is not insincere, is also contagious and can reassure those around us. This can therefore help to make relationships more pleasant and our "opponents" more conciliatory (see Sophie Guittat's article (in French): *"Les 10 vertus thérapeutiques du sourire" (The 10 therapeutic virtues of smiling)*, (2021). The link temporarily or permanently disabled [254] - [see Ref 36]. There's a video (in French) that might be a good substitute for the article [255].

- Other factors will also influence our behavioural choices, including **the physical environment and level of comfort**, such as: living or working in a small space or, conversely, a spacious one, close to nature or surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the city. More specifically, the quality of our housing will also have a significant impact on our health and, indirectly, our state of mind: heat, cold, humidity, mould, pollution, noise pollution, overcrowding, discomfort, lack of hygiene, and many other conditions that are linked to our comfort and our access to serenity and well-being, or, conversely, to stress, lack of privacy or loneliness, social control, lack of freedom, etc.

- Our **emotional and social environment**: partner, family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, allies, enemies. Our social circle is also a determining factor in that it can provide support and a reference, or conversely, social pressure and a limitation to our well-being. Therefore, the density and quality of our social contacts will be decisive. And these notions are, of course, relative. Everyone considers them according to their values, education and personality.
  The support and affection of those around us are essential to our balance, but unfortunately not everyone benefits from them. It is well known that it is better to be alone than in bad company. However, when present, the support and affection of those around us are vectors that boost our well-being, our health, our self-confidence, and all our altruistic capacities, while calming our harmful tendencies and stress. Isolation, on the other hand, not only deprives us of support and affection, but also stimulates repetitive thoughts due to a lack of distraction. It is then common to fall into ruminations that lead to a deterioration in mood, frustration, loss of confidence and all kinds of negative emotions, which pave the way for the use of power relations.

- Furthermore, our **cultural and professional environment**, i.e. the usefulness, intellectual content and moral meaning of our profession and leisure activities, but also the balance between our obligations and our leisure time, and more broadly the cultural influences exerted on us by the people we interact with (family, colleagues, friends, neighbours, etc.) and the media we consume (television, social media, websites, cinema, reading, etc.): all this will also shape our mental profile. It goes without saying that everyone we interact with inevitably influences us. If we only associate with people who do not share our values, interests, ways of functioning or modes of communication, we will find ourselves much more often in situations of confrontation, over-adaptation or forcing ourselves to hide who we are and what we think. There is nothing wrong with associating with people who are different from us, quite the contrary. However, spending time with people who are very different from us (in the sense that they are too different from us), closely and most of the time, helps us to live outside our comfort zone. Furthermore, if our profession promotes overconsumption, pollution, profit, competition, violence, or simply involves these excesses, it is probably not the ideal environment in which to develop our most constructive potential. This is equally true if we work in a highly hierarchical environment and are required to either submit to strict and/or abusive authority or to exercise it ourselves. And when it comes

to leisure activities, some develop conviviality, openness, health and service to others, while others involve competition, status, waste, the consumption of addictive substances, submission to harmful group dynamics, etc. This also applies to the information and learning with which we fill our brains. Not following the news does not seem healthy to me, but following it closely is even less so because of its anxiety-inducing nature, but also because the news as it is provided to us by the mass media is not objective, in the sense that we are only given the negative, and that the slant of the information remains dependent on the mentality of the journalists, who are generally among those most imbued with the mentality conveyed by their country. Therefore, in the West, journalists, with a few exceptions – and it is worth noting them – are the ones who will best educate us in the values that we should abandon as quickly as possible. Similarly, if we choose to inform ourselves or train ourselves in practices or knowledge that will imbue us with values of rationality, competition, profit, consumerism, violence, etc., we will remain in a mentality closer to survival and further from consciousness. As for the time devoted to relaxation, its abundance or scarcity will either distance us from or bring us back to the survival situation mentioned above. Moreover, in the frantic race that our society proposes, some people manage to try to fit as many activities as possible into a schedule that always has the same time constraints; and thus trap themselves in situations of stress, frustration and lack of time, when their initial goal was to enjoy a greater number of motivating activities. This is a rather individualistic mindset, which will lead to ever-increasing power struggles by demanding more and more from others than from oneself in order to reduce the time spent on each activity.

- The **events** we experience will also influence our susceptibility to falling, or not, into power struggles. The scale and/or repetition of problems encountered in our daily lives (related to bereavement, illness, conflict, threats to employment, etc.) will make it easier to experience emotions that will make us more vulnerable, more likely to let our guard down and rush into power games. All it takes is to be angry, depressed, isolated, rumination, or in pain or suffering, and we will automatically revert to more primitive behaviours. Conversely, the presence of attractive projects, successes, the support of the people we love, the meaning we give to our lives and the stability that all this brings over time will help reduce our resorting to power struggles.

And since all these conditions vary over time, this can lead to periods where we are constantly champing at the bit, quickly falling into the traps of aggressiveness and powerlessness.

And outside of stressful or threatening situations, if our survival is assured, both materially and psychologically, we can act calmly, which will make it easier for us to show altruism, indulgence and empathy towards others.

iii Level of consciousness

We have seen that our tendency or not to engage in power struggles depends, for each of us, on both our past and our present situation. It also depends on our level of consciousness.

It should be noted that in the West, and even all over the world, while life expectancy has increased significantly in recent decades thanks to a more technologically advanced healthcare system, the quality of our thoughts and emotions has generally deteriorated. This is because we have become capable, through rational knowledge and technology, of caring for our bodies as one would repair a car at a garage, but we have done absolutely nothing to care for our minds and souls and have not evolved one iota in our level of consciousness.
Yet it is our **level of consciousness**, our ability to observe and manage our emotions and thoughts, and to conduct our relationships, that will, among other things, enable us to be aware that we are on the verge of entering into power games and to be able to choose not to enter into them and to distance ourselves from them.

In this sense, first of all, **questioning** our education, our culture, our conditionings and habits, our beliefs and our values will enable us to get to know ourselves better, to broaden our consciousness and to act differently in reality. It is clear that a society based on consumption, the pursuit of wealth and profit, power relations, excessive rationality, and which is incapable of preventing wars, famine, crime, etc., does not convey the best beliefs, values, and conditionings. And that questioning all of this can only be beneficial, not only for our physical, mental and moral health, but also for the social actions we can take.

Next, our ability or inability to **communicate with others** is also an issue. Because this ability implies, on the one hand, knowing ourselves and our own needs and asserting them; and on the other hand, the ability to meet others and seek to respect their needs. It also requires good listening skills, using the right words, thoughts and intentions, with a view to honesty. High-quality relational communication is a royal road to cooperation and empathy, and away from power struggles, manipulation and other perversities of communication.

And then finally, the **practice of meditation**, which is increasingly recognised, even in medical circles, allows (in all its forms) for much better management of thoughts and emotions, and a much greater ability to react calmly to the vagaries of life.

Meditation and the letting go that it involves, like many other learning processes, works like a muscle. It is necessary to exercise it to be able to use it more easily and effectively. And like riding a bicycle, once you learn it, you never forget it. This is why guided meditations can speed up the learning process. There are thousands of different versions of guided meditations, which allow us to: expand our ability to calm the mind, observe the mind, enter the heart, visualise, nurture positive thoughts, manage our emotions, experience introspection of the body and mind, put the problems we face into perspective, recognise our mistakes, free ourselves from certain beliefs and conditioning, open ourselves up to something greater than ourselves and to new perspectives on life. As a result, it helps us to reorganise our neural connections, better manage our mental and physical health, and evolve in our behaviours, relationships, and the choices we make in our lives.

I also think it is worth mentioning Stephen Porges' polyvagal theory again, which I explain briefly in the appendix. This is the least controllable part of our biological functioning, and it greatly influences our thoughts and behaviours. But I think that being able to evolve towards greater consciousness means knowing our limits, including our physiological limits, and even managing to overcome them, or at least manage them differently so that we do not suffer from them in ignorance or powerlessness.

All these elements (and I have probably omitted many others) help us to understand the multifaceted nature of a harmful trend that is almost universal, affecting every individual, but which can also be seen underlying everything collective, such as communities, institutions, authorities, companies, associations, etc. They are clearly evident in political trends that favour:
- either individualism, security concerns, exclusion (racism and nationalism) and an economy based on growth and profit;
- or solidarity, education and prevention, an economy more oriented towards sharing, equity and inclusion.

And it may seem like a lot to learn and master in order to choose to focus on the positive and constructive aspects of life – far removed from power struggles. However, all these factors interact and stimulate each other. By working on one, you improve certain others. By working on several, you improve all the others. Not necessarily immediately, but it works like a ball of knots. Loosening one knot helps to loosen the

others; untangling one knot helps to untangle the others. Once a few knots have been untangled, it becomes child's play to retrieve the intact string. And doing it with others provides additional motivation and speeds up the process.

g - Our capacity for empathy depends above all on our ability to recognise what distances us from it - the altruism of religions eludes this aspect.

It seems inconceivable to me that we can become altruistic and empathetic, practise solidarity and cooperation, access collective intelligence, practise non-violence, and behave in this way reliably and permanently, as long as we ignore our intrinsic tendency to fall back into our old ways of power struggles, selfishness, fear, and anger, which function reflexively, conditionally, learnedly, or as a result of traumatic wounds. It is a delusion to believe it possible
It would be like believing that an alcoholic or heroin addict could give up their addiction simply by choosing to do so, without even acknowledging that they were addicted.

And yet this is what most religions (those most widely practised in the world, with the possible exception of certain Buddhist practices) propose.

Religions, as well as most philosophical and spiritual trends, propose that we practise altruism and empathy, although this is expressed in other terms: "love one another" among Christians, "compassion" among Buddhists, "non-violence" with Gandhi and Luther King and in the Jain religion, "make love not war" among hippies, etc. All of them have expressed it in their own way. And this helps many believers to give the best of themselves. But, in a way, the message is incomplete, the instructions for use are missing.

For, the religions almost never talk about the reasons why we fall back into our faults. They simply forbid them and condemn them, but without giving us the keys to moving away from them, and thus to stop resorting to guilt in order to achieve responsabilization through consciousness.
It is therefore not surprising to find among very religious people (representatives or ordinary practitioners) those who preach love for one's neighbour but sometimes or often behave like dictators or in a perverse manner towards those around them.

In a way, religions have never protected us from violence and injustice. Religious wars punctuate history. The mistreatment of children and the elderly in religious institutions is not necessarily rarer than elsewhere. The Christian religion, in particular, was imposed by force on almost the entire continent of South America, as well as in most of the colonies in Africa. Religion allowed slavery and the Crusades. The clergy enriched themselves at the expense of believers. And even though many things have improved, abuse in religious circles is still common today. Male domination is even more prevalent than in society at large, as women are completely excluded from all levels of power in most religious hierarchies. I will limit myself to quoting a few comments on the Christian religion, as this is the religion in which I was raised and I know too little about the practices of other religions.

I am not saying that religions are the source of all harms, far from it. Many of the faithful who follow religious precepts are indeed more altruistic than average. But the religious model, which imposes its norms, dogmas and rituals in a system where power relations persist, with a strict hierarchy and almost universal male domination, will never succeed in enabling the large-scale practice of the love of one's neighbour that it advocates, precisely because the majority of those who represent it have not done the work of introspection on their own dark shadow, and persist in preaching Love with a capital "L" without taking into account the fact that hatred and violence keep coming back to haunt them through the back door, and without understanding why. They cannot therefore teach or transmit what they themselves have not managed to integrate, and their sermons, however positive they may be, can only remain partly

unheeded, since the appropriate instructions have no place there. And I would like to add that this description should not be generalised to all religious representatives.

And currently, adopting benevolent attitudes, altruism, compassion and empathy seems more unattainable than ever, even though these themes have been preached to us in one way or another for thousands of years.

Not only has this message failed to become widespread in practice, but for the past forty years or so, religions have been losing ground in Western countries, mainly in Western Europe. They have been replaced by new trends – the main markers of today's societies – which are far from spiritual, but which currently serve as a religion for many and undermine all the values advocated by religions in the past.

The recent emergence of the smartphone, combined with that of social networks, is also not unrelated to the negative influences on mentalities. This combination acts, so to speak, as a prosthesis for our brains, which are conditioned to these markers. And it is an invasive prosthesis. Who we really are has nothing to do with these delusions that mislead our minds.

But the awakening is not far off, and while the path will probably not involve a return to our religious dogmas, the values advocated by religions and certain psychological theories may well regain strength. But it will no longer be a question of following rituals, dogmas and beliefs. It is likely that everyone who brings about change will be able to access a new set of values and understanding out of necessity, through experience, and because ultimately we no longer have a choice. But also because, once a sufficiently large number of individuals have internalised it, it will begin to flow naturally for everyone.

In other words, if religions and other philosophical and spiritual trends fail to transform us, it is probably because they ask us to follow them and adopt behaviours that are proposed on us from outside, without us being aware of the internal reasons that prevent us from putting them into practice. As long as we follow precepts, we will act correctly at certain times, but these will be learned, conditioned, even imposed behaviours, and they will require effort on our part and remain largely superficial. And as soon as we are affected by a destabilising or frustrating event, we will revert to more automatic, impulsive behaviours. For as long as we do not know ourselves, we will continue to ignore our shadow side, which will keep reminding us of itself despite all our efforts.

And while it is wise to light the way out of darkness, I think it is necessary to understand darkness in order to grasp the need to choose light. Otherwise, the light will only have the effect of a mirage, and we will follow the source of brightness without knowing the path we are travelling. But the path is more important than the goal. And knowing our shadow side is not part of the religious path. Buddhism is probably the religion or philosophy that comes closest to recognising the traps we need to escape or heal from.

If living according to positive values such as empathy and altruism, and everything that revolves around them, is part of the path, we must also shed light on all our beliefs, conditioning, fears, impulses and negative emotions, which systematically and impulsively distance us from empathetic attitudes and lead us back to power struggles.
Otherwise, we will try to fight against ourselves by attempting to hide our dark shadow. Whereas it is by looking at it squarely and allowing it to settle like mud at the bottom of the water (the effect of meditation, among other things) that it will enable us to regain the clarity to make more virtuous choices.

Looking at our dark shadow is therefore not about fighting against it, but rather accepting it and giving ourselves the means to calm it.

Rejecting negativity does not eliminate it; it is simply running away from our responsibilities.

h - Personal evolution and denial of reality

Many people who are on a psychological, but above all spiritual, journey tend to lose touch with reality. They feel inspired by the teachings of masters, philosophies or religions, but do not anchor their learning in their everyday experience and the context that accompanies it. Their evolution is therefore more intellectual and emotional than concrete and turned toward the world. This perpetuates selfish behaviours that make them indifferent to reality. It is also one of the consequences of our inability to connect with our shadow side and our tendency to follow rather than live through experience. Here are three fairly common examples of this.

i Completely avoiding the news causes us to lose touch with reality

I would like to start by mentioning the case of quite a number of people who are on a spiritual journey and who, in this context, refuse outright to follow the news so as not to feed on all the negative energy it conveys. It seems quite sensible to me to distance ourselves from anything that carries negativity (violence, depressing news, etc.) in order to help us function more healthily.
For it is true that consuming the details of all the horrors served up to us by the mass media on a daily basis is not constructive. Not only is it impossible to know about them all, but being informed about them does not help us to avoid them and drains our time and energy that we could be devoting to other things. And it is also terribly depressing.
However, news (spoken, televised or printed) are not the only source of information. In the age of the internet, we have a choice of sources and topics. Reading the headlines of the wire allows us to sort through them.
And I think it is possible to choose new ways of informing ourselves and that it is nevertheless essential to know the state of the world, to know the broad outlines of how it works and how it malfunctions; which is different from feeding on all the news on a daily basis.
Because by remaining ignorant of what is happening in our society and beyond our borders, we are led to live and act in a society whose reality we no longer know, and we are no longer in line with it. Most people who distance themselves from current affairs as part of a spiritual journey are generally financially privileged and unaware of the harmful effects of their privileges on society. Many are almost completely unaware of global warming and continue their highly CO2-intensive activities, and so on. In a way, their ignorance of current events leads them to live in a relatively irresponsible manner with regard to current events. Spirituality that is not rooted in reality is nothing more than a mirage.
For, not only does cutting ourselves off completely from current events take us away from reality, it is also a good way to absolve ourselves of our responsibilities. Because, in my opinion, it is essential to know in which direction the world is heading. And despite the clamour of bad news every day, more positive news is beginning to emerge, signs of a profound and silent change that is currently taking place in a less visible way, but which the media landscape is nevertheless beginning to report on. I think that if we want to act on the world, we must do so, at least to some extent, in full knowledge of the facts. Those who completely reject the news are not among those who will help us avoid the abyss that threatens us.

ii When using the law of attraction becomes magical

Another aspect of certain spiritual trends, less related to religion (more towards New Age, or certain interpretations of the law of attraction), is to invest in the illusion of our omnipotence. The idea is that by freeing ourselves from our dark shadow, we would have more freedom to do and become whatever we want, no matter what. It's a bit like all our desires could come true, as in a fairy tale, without that it could harm those around us. Again, this is partly true. But according to some – including some of those who teach these spiritual teachings – this often implies infinite freedom.

I remember seeing a documentary on this subject, which explained that reality exists in our minds, and depending on how we manage our thoughts, i.e. our beliefs, but also and above all our visualisations, external reality will align with our internal reality. This is for most part true. But we were told that external reality could be compared to a cinema screen onto which the result of our inner reality was projected. And so it is impossible to change external reality because that would be like trying to change the image projected on the screen. And in this context, according to these explanations, not only do we all experience different realities, but external reality and the reality of others ultimately matter very little. It would only be a guide to teach us how to manage our inner reality. But it's not as simple as that. We do not live alone on the planet; we are part of a whole. And we also have a concrete power over external reality through our behaviour. People who experience great success and happiness probably make the law of attraction work perfectly. But if they do so selfishly, they will still have a very harmful effect on everything around them.

True spiritual evolution means becoming conscious that we are part of a whole, and that all our actions do indeed interfere with the reality of that whole, with the reality of our surroundings, and therefore with the lives of others, human or not. Some preachers, in the context of the law of attraction, talk about abundance, but they often translate this abundance into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

I think that in this case, we are leaving the realm of reality. Spiritual evolution implies psychological evolution. And when we evolve psychologically, we inevitably reach a stage where what matters to us goes beyond ourselves and concerns everyone. It then becomes obvious that taking a large slice of the cake means taking away a slice from others, simply because we live on a planet with limited resources.

However, in personal evolution circles, there is a persistent ambiguity among those who work on themselves, and even more so among those who offer to help them, when they fail to take these realities into account. And this denial of reality works all the better because it is generally the same people who distance themselves from current events and therefore no longer feel too concerned about the problems of the world.

iii Evolving in a world of Care Bears

All too often, when we look at the spiritual side of things, we are confronted with atmospheres, attitudes and influences that are meant to be positive and full of love, which some would describe as Care Bears ('bisounours' in French), but which completely deny the presence of negative emotions, even though these often overwhelm us.

When spiritual life is dictated by the mind – philosophy, ideology, rituals and beliefs – we cannot connect with the heart and remain guided by our reasoning. To connect with the heart, we must go through the body, either with breathing or with our guts through our emotions. And that is why many spiritual approaches veer towards what rational people call "Care Bears" (bisounours). When the spiritual path is guided solely by reason, we do indeed take the direction of "good feelings", but not really that of the heart, because it is not rooted in experience, which inevitably passes through the body. We then reach for the sky without being anchored in reality, and we are prevented from taking the path of wisdom and consciousness.

iv Evolving spiritually cannot spare us from adapting with integrity our behaviours to concrete reality

Whatever psychological and spiritual path we take, if we do not also concern ourselves with the material aspect, which I would tend to summarise as our ecological footprint, but which goes much further than that, we continue to go astray.

Spiritual and psychological progress is not enough. It is also necessary to bring this into line with our material lives, in relation to our bodies, our environment, those around us, all humankind and simply life itself.

The crises that affect us, as well as those that are brewing, not only make us progress in our minds, but also confront us in the most obvious way possible, so that we also take action in our material lives.

4. Leaving the balance of power behind – taking care of our shadow side through real psychological work

While it is fairly easy to understand the above on an intellectual level, it is much less so on an experiential level. However, the work is not so much about understanding that our thoughts and emotions too often betray us, leading us into scenarios we do not really want. The task is to realise, in real time, with that same mind, the moment when emotions carry us away from our intentions and when the mind no longer functions in the same way. In a way, it is similar to being drunk and dependent and deciding, when you have already had a few drinks, not to have another one, with the aim of becoming sober and completely abstinent again. And this, while knowing that the situation will repeat itself. Because while with alcohol it is possible to decide not to touch it, this is not the case with emotions, as they generally arise without warning and instantly hijack our will before we even realise it. This work is therefore not a straightforward learning process. To make it easier, it can be helpful to understand the mechanism at play. I will therefore try to explain the process by breaking it down into steps.

a - The inescapable step: starting by acknowledging our dark shadow

Tacitly, we all know that we have flaws, that our behaviours are not always appropriate, that we sometimes get carried away by our emotions, that we make mistakes, that our perception of reality is not necessarily or always objective. And in concrete terms, we are generally unable to pinpoint exactly where the shoe pinches.

And if, in the previous chapters, I refer to religions and spirituality, it is to be quite explicit about the idea that adopting new ways of functioning in our society is not just a matter of deciding or intending to clean up our behaviour and our mentality by simply developing our altruism. First of all, it is a question of no longer living in survival mode (which requires a minimum income) and then it requires us to really work on ourselves, starting by accepting to look at and acknowledge our shadow side.

For while it is essential to know the issues that surround us, it is equally essential to know of the part of ourselves that contributes to them by ceasing to deny our responsibility in this scenario, and this, in particular, on a psychological level.
However, once we reach this level, it is even more fundamental to choose to direct our energy towards the constructive part of the work of evolution that needs to be done.

To put it simply: working towards the positive without taking the negative into account simply does not work. But once we take into account this negative part that concerns us, we must clearly avoid digging deeper into it, and we must instead orient ourselves massively towards the positive part that we want to achieve. We must therefore never let our guard down with regard to this negative part, which will seize any opportunity to come back through the back door, but we must focus most of our energy on the positive part in which we want to invest ourselves. It is really essential to be very clear about these two aspects:
- recognising the problem without digging deeper into it (stopping denial),

- and once the problem is known, focus on solutions, but without ever ceasing to recognise where the problem lies, otherwise we return to denial; this will lead to all our behaviours being dictated by problematic ways of functioning.

It is therefore essential not to invest in our shadow side, while also observing that part of us that does not participate in it, in order to disidentify from the part of us that remains attached to it and thus awaken our consciousness. The idea is to become capable of kindly accepting the thoughts, emotions and intentions that stem from our automatic responses, instincts, impulses, and the behaviours and behavioural strategies that result from them; and to stop denying or ignoring them, so that we are able to choose our light side.
For if we refuse to go through this stage, it is our unconscious that will keep control of our mind and force us to direct our thoughts, actions and intentions towards our dark shadow.
In a way, there is no point in turning on the light as long as we have a blindfold over our eyes. Or, to use another comparison: when we project light on our shadow side, it dissipates.

Until we are able to face, recognise and accept our anger, jealousy, resentment, judgements, mistakes, failures and all those aspects of ourselves that we do not like to see, we will be forced to remain subject to their often insidious consequences, despite our good intentions, and we will persevere in attitudes, behaviours and strategies based on instincts, automatisms, habits or conditioning, and we will use the wrong means to try to get rid of them:

> by trying to mask them, thus not accepting them and behaving hypocritically; this can lead to a great deal of perversity in our attitudes;
> by trying to annihilate them in our lives, pretending they do not exist, through denial;
> by trying to protect ourselves from them through escape or flight forward;
> by attempting to project the responsibility for the consequences of this onto others through projection, defensive attitudes, criticism, struggle, combat, rivalry, competition, and the pursuit of status;
> by attempting to offload their disadvantages onto others via abuse, manipulation, lying, etc.;
> or by shirking our responsibilities and our conscience, giving up in the face of adversity, which is another form of escape, in the form of submission, inertia, depression, addiction, consumption, or somatisation.

The work of evolution that will restore our ability to practise behaviours underpinned by high values (compassion, altruism, love, empathy, mutual aid, solidarity, generosity, respect, self-giving, abnegation, authenticity, integrity, etc.) does not only involve a decision, an intention, goodwill, effort and practice. As long as we refuse to look on the other side of the mirror and face what we find there, all our negative attitudes will keep coming back and dictating our behaviour, systematically undermining our choices and intentions.
And it is only on this condition – becoming more conscious – that the pre-eminence of the balance of power in all relationships in society at all levels can be removed. Inequality, injustice, material poverty created by material wealth, and all the other even broader consequences cannot be resolved as long as the human continues to behave like a kid who pretends to be well-behaved but only disobeys and lies.

The human is still a child and think he is an adult, granting himselves all rights and destroying everything in their path. Except that at the age of majority and beyond, he is no longer cared for or kept within certain limits by an educational system such as the family or school. And that the only way to educate himself is through trial and error, and he has to bite the dust, get knocked out, go completely astray, and pay the price of this at the collective level. His only way to salvation is to mature by becoming conscious of his own responsibility to achieve this. And this can happen at the collective level only at the price of first realising this at the individual level by a significant number of persons.

b - Dark shadow and balance of power

Although our shadow side refers to a broader concept than the recurring use of the balance of power, I have chosen to use the expression/concept anyway because, in my view, our capacity for love, altruism and empathy on the one hand, and our constant recourse to the balance of power on the other, are two aspects that are intertwined. Shadow exists because of light. The same is true of our capacity for love and our use of the balance of power. We can only truly enter the heart if we have experienced the balance of power. Until we are truly conscious that our emotions, beliefs, automatic responses and conditioning prevent us from listening to our hearts, it is impossible for us to root our choice to move towards the light.

Whatever difficulties we may encounter in a relationship, they will almost always be contaminated by the presence of a balance of power. And what characterises the ability to overcome these difficulties is generally the capacity, even if only on the part of one of the protagonists, to leave this balance of power behind. And from then on, those who work in this direction lead others to evolve.

I will therefore discuss here how to address this tendency towards power games on an individual level. Because if we can overcome it individually, we will then be able to practise this on a collective level with a much greater chance of success, with a knock-on effect from one person to another.

c - Achieving to defuse the negative hold of certain emotions and their consequences on our thoughts and behaviours

In our daily lives, each of us goes through periods of kindliness, varying in length, influenced by our upbringing, experience, and environment. Moving away from a power struggle mentality mainly involves becoming aware, on a recurring basis, every day, each time we lose our serenity and kindliness and slip into defensive behaviours, even the slightest.

The balance of power is embedded in largely conditioned and instinctive modes of functioning. When we encounter difficulties that involve emotions such as fear, frustration or shame, our thoughts arise automatically without us choosing them. And these thoughts very often trigger negative behaviours that we do not choose either. It is automatic, or "beyond our control". It is a more primitive part of the brain - the limbic brain - that takes over and causes our cerebral cortex, the seat of reflection, to function differently, diverting and limiting its functioning. When emotion cannot lead to direct, effective action in relation to the situation that caused it, it forces thoughts into a rut that persists over time, as long as the hormones linked to the emotion are present in the blood, and sometimes much longer. It works in much the same way as a catchy tune heard on the radio in the morning, which follows us around all day, against our will. And sometimes it can even turn into rumination, where we find ourselves trapped in our negative thoughts and emotions, like a hamster in its wheel - when each negative thought leads to other negative thoughts; as a result, we are unable to escape the mood that feeds on itself and can imprison us for days, months, or years.

It can therefore take a long time to become conscious of this process. In general, we only realise it after the fact, when we have returned to a more serene and benevolent state of mind.
And it is all the more difficult to be aware that our thoughts are influenced by such emotions, because these emotions involve a whole hormonal production. So it becomes embedded in the body. And this can persist in the body for hours, making it impossible to regain serenity, the state that allows the cortex to perform its usual functions. Because even when we realise that we are trapped in an emotion and want to get out of it, the stress associated with that emotion is marked in our body and will not let go just because we decide it should.

As for strategies or conditioning, when a problematic event is triggered, an automatic mechanism may prevent the emotion from surfacing and cause our brain to function defensively, without us being aware of it. We may then appear calm and serene in the face of an event that we perceive as dangerous (that stresses, worries or upsets us) and adopt a whole series of behaviours that serve to prevent the emotion from arising, thereby preventing the feeling of danger from manifesting itself more strongly. It is in this context that highly negative (condemnatory) judgments and criticisms, lies, manipulation, dictatorial attitudes, reproaches and projections, flights forwards, cowardice, facts being presented with a fait accompli, and many others.

The learning process of becoming conscious when an emotion arises with the thoughts it imposes on us, which leads us to use the balance of power; this learning process begins when we start to realise – only after we have left it behind – the scenario in which we have been trapped.

Later, awareness of the phenomenon will begin to emerge as we grapple with our uncontrolled thoughts and emotions. This creates a kind of internal conflict, because the instinctive part proves to be more powerful than the fact that we begin to perceive that we are in this process. We therefore learn to navigate these flashes of lucidity, which cause us to question all the thoughts that cross our minds at that moment. And we begin to shift our behaviour slightly. And it is very difficult not to believe our thoughts, because when we are experiencing intense emotions – which is often the case with anger and fear – the thoughts that accompany these emotions seem extremely obvious to us. The more we experience these realisations while we are in the midst of emotion, the more we learn to get through the situation while trying to act as little as possible in this state of mind. This is even more difficult in the case of strategies, as we do not have clear access to the emotion at play, and we feel within our rights in whatever negative behaviour we have adopted.

And there comes a day when, as we are entering the emotional or strategic state of mind, we become immediately aware of it. This allows us to enter it in a less brutal, less intense or less complete way, and to be able to avoid acting in a harmful manner, or at least to adopt a much more harmless attitude. And it allows us to get out of it more quickly.
Note: the elastic technique, EFT, smiling, certain guided meditations on letting go, and several techniques offered in the Gupta programme can help to leave both the emotion and the state of mind it causes more quickly.

And eventually, a day will come when awareness takes hold before the emotion and automatic thought pattern can kick in, which simply allows you to avoid entering into it.

It is also important to know that with age, this negative process becomes more common if we have not worked on ourselves. And as the shocks and wounds of life multiply over time, traumatic aspects will make the emotional traps described above much more ingrained in our habits. And when these traumatic aspects end up working together, it is a system of negative reactions that ends up sticking to us. This makes the process much less manageable and requires much more intense work, usually through therapy. And from then on, it is no longer a matter of learning or changing habits, but of healing.

This is why, as we get older, we may notice in some people a tendency to withdraw, to judge, and to react negatively, with fear or anger, even without any real trigger, and in others, who are more resilient, a wisdom, an openness, an ability to put things into perspective, and a tendency to be indulgent towards others. It is possible for these two aspects to coexist. But in this case, each will manifest itself in different areas of life. And these are tendencies; no one is completely free of negative reactions, or, conversely, totally enslaved by them, except in the case of certain age-related neurological diseases.

The path of learning to recognise our emotions and thoughts and becoming capable of no longer engaging in the power games that result from them concerns us all. And the more people who choose to

work on evolving their consciousness, the easier this process will be for everyone, and the better the techniques for achieving it can be developed and exploited.
This path is not linear. After initial successes, there will still be failures. It is a long-term endeavour that requires perseverance.

And while until now it has generally been crises and disasters that have awakened us from the grip of our shadow side, we are now reaching a stage where this is becoming more accessible by choosing to work on ourselves through meditation and a number of recent psycho-energetic techniques that can lead us to question these behavioural drifts and leave them behind much more quickly.

As emotions are involved in this process, it also means adopting the healthiest lifestyle possible (diet, exercise, quality of sleep, etc.). This is because our emotions are dependent on what we do to our bodies. Eating sugar, for example, can make us more aggressive or violent. Exercise helps to detoxify and therefore reduce stress and purify our bodies. All of this affects fatigue, stress, how quickly we become emotional and, as a result, greatly influences our thoughts and therefore the choices we make and how we behave.

I could have gone much further in explaining our tendency to switch to harmful emotions that lead us to use power or submission towards those around us or in much broader contexts. But I fear that I would lose most readers, as this strays so far from the basic theme: profit and dysfunction in our societies. I have nevertheless added an appendix on the polyvagal theory proposed by Stephen Porges, one of the pioneers in this field, which has established very clear links between neuroscience and psychology. This is one of the avenues that allows us to explore the topics I have just mentioned in greater depth in order to better understand the link between our mind and our physiological functioning, which interfere with each other.

I remain convinced that it is here – through the elevation of individual consciousness – that our shared future is at stake. It'll be make or break. We will either evolve in our ability to move away from the balance of power, or we will destroy ourselves in wars, shortages and disasters that we ourselves have created, unable to stop repeating the mistakes of the past, continuing to send hundreds of millions of human beings to their deaths through our inertia, our bad faith, our complacency towards the powerful and our attachment to our privileges.

d - The mental attitudes to be privileged

Upstream of our automatic emotional or strategic reactions, which we can learn to manage, there are also all kinds of automatic thoughts and choices that we can voluntarily decide to transform in order to avoid triggering these conflict-inducing emotional reactions.

First of all, to avoid entering into a balance of power when we are pursuing a goal that is partly dependent on other people or authorities who are not necessarily favourable to it, it is necessary to adopt three mental attitudes:

The first is to stop opposing, resisting, and agitating by any means possible to make ourselves heard, and in the process, come to accept that we may not necessarily be heard.

The second involves ceasing to constantly measure ourselves against those who do not share our approach, and choosing to focus on our goals rather than on the obstacles;

And the last is the ability to think outside the box, beyond the norms and rules imposed on us – without breaking them.

We will come back to this later.

Functioning from these perspectives makes it easier to avoid conflicts and rivalries or to reduce their intensity and consequences. And this is how the most unlikely innovations, achievements, accomplishments, successes and resolutions can come about.

In a broader context, these attitudes also make it easier to choose to build something new, without seeking to destroy or oppose what already exists. As already mentioned, this requires the ability to think independently of the way of thinking associated with the problem. When new solutions emerge, if they are fundamentally right, they are quickly adopted by those who are ready, and they help to transform mentalities without forcing anything. The more they are practised, the more those who adhere to them will disengage from the ways of functioning of a system that has become obsolete. And the latter will lose its power, without struggle or destruction.

I would like to reiterate that, in the face of acute crises, when there is real danger and/or violence, none of this holds true, nor does it when our freedoms are curtailed by violent threats. But the vast majority of disagreements or conflicts in society, at all levels, generally take place outside these contexts. And that is why it is at this level that change must take place. And when the resolution of disagreements without resorting to the balance of power begins to become widespread, then automatically the frequency and severity of more violent and destructive conflicts will decrease. For it is the general mentality that will have evolved. From then on, those who learn to move away from power struggles in all their actions and relationships are doing work that will lead others to do the same.

And one of the major difficulties in achieving this lies in the ability to distinguish between real dangers and false threats generated by our emotions and thoughts (what we call irrational emotions and thoughts), which deceive us and cause us to react to them rather than reacting healthily to the real situation.

The path to dealing with our untimely thoughts and emotions that sabotage our kindliness and goodwill towards others, and to abandoning the endless recourse to attitudes governed by the balance of power (domination as well as submission), this path begins with learning to accept what is. This is a process that must be integrated and is done in stages, as follows:

i Accepting

In any type of relationship, when we want to assert our opinions, demands, needs, and limits, it is possible to learn to guide our actions in a completely different direction than that of opposition and resistance to what is or to the powers that be. This requires becoming able to step away from the apparent urgency of the situation at hand, even when all the signs are flashing red.

When we react impulsively to a situation, we act based on our emotions (mainly fear or anger), in a rough, defensive manner. However, contrary to our expectations, this type of behaviour will most often provoke resistance from those we are dealing with, either through denial of the problem, through inertia, or through a violent or abusive reaction on their part.
The alternative to a defensive, oppositional or resistant attitude, which is most likely to work, is one that comes from the heart. It consists first of all in accepting what is, without taking the path of powerlessness, nor that of submission, nor even that of opposition. Just that of acceptance. This first step is fundamental and undoubtedly the most difficult. This is because feelings of powerlessness mixed with indignation or fear are very difficult to manage, and the urge to act 'against' or to flee in a hurry is enormous. It is therefore a question of becoming able to look at our fears, anger, frustration and other negative emotions with kindness towards ourselves, to welcome them, to see that part of us is not participating in them, and to disidentify ourselves from the other part of us that dictates that we act urgently – except in truly urgent

situations, which are much rarer than we imagine. This means learning not to listen to the urge to react too quickly. It is the key that closes the door on opposition and thereby opens all the other doors, which are less immediate but will make all the difference.

ii Persevering in asking

Beyond acceptance, there are initiatives that we can choose to take outside the realm of opposition, avoidance, blackmail, manipulation, etc. In a given situation that we want to change, when faced with an interlocutor, each time we express a proposal and argue in its favour, it is worth asking ourselves whether we are prepared to accept that this proposal may be rejected; to ask ourselves whether we are prepared to do nothing to force our idea or opinion on others, whether we are prepared to wait and remain inert. If we are prepared to do so, then we will be able to show perseverance, to persist in proposing it, knowing that sooner or later it will come to fruition, even if not in the way we originally proposed it.
This attitude of waiting and perseverance is fundamental. Because usually, most of the time, it's the exact opposite that happens: we are not willing to wait. Our impatience is proportional to our indignation at the problem, and we want to act urgently at all costs. And acting urgently leads us to do anything: either to act violently, aggressively, or in a roundabout, insidious, perverse way; or it leads us to a wild goose chase without achieving anything. And this is what most often happens with citizen resistance movements. Rather than choosing actions that lead to solutions, they turn to pseudo-solutions that consist of trying to require (without having the power that such requirements imply), and agitating and making noise, (or trying to be seen or heard by people who wear blinders and cover their ears: this does not usually help much). Persisting in agitating in a vacuum does not get us very far. And as we have seen, those in power are particularly good at covering their ears and blindfolding themselves in the face of protest movements, even if on the surface they pretend to be concerned and cooperative. And the balance of power is rarely sufficient to force them to listen. This means that making noise is simply futile in the vast majority of cases.

I am caricaturing the situation by explaining this, because the influence of citizen movements that directly oppose government policies is not entirely without effect. But the results are extremely slow and can take decades or even several generations, and in some cases centuries or millennia, to achieve.

As for movements that violently oppose government policies, if they do not prevail, they simply act against themselves. For violence, in this case, strengthens the convictions of those against whom it is used.

And, as I have already mentioned, many people who try to practise non-violence in activist movements do so by persisting in framing their actions in the balance of power. In this sense, I think they are very far from the concept of non-violence.

Civil disobedience, for example, is considered a non-violent alternative. It is in some cases. When laws are broken to create a more just situation, or to directly prevent an unjust situation from being enforced. This is the case when a passenger refuses to sit down on a plane to protest against the presence of an undocumented migrant who is being forcibly returned to their country of origin, where they face a serious threat to their survival. It was also the case when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a 'white' person on a bus in Montgomery, in the United States, in 1955. It was also the case when Gandhi led the crowd to the coast for the "Salt March" in 1930. They are breaking the law, but the action that breaks the law directly contributes to restoring a form of justice that the law prevents.

This is much less the case when a law is broken in the context of demonstrations, since demonstrating does not, by its very nature, contribute to restoring a form of justice that the law prevents, and therefore breaking the law is a hollow provocation which, because it does not intrinsically carry the demand being

made, almost inevitably stimulates a violent response from the authorities. All the more so because there are ways to demonstrate without breaking the law.
This demonstrates, conversely, that the implicit (and partly unconscious) goal of the demonstrators is to provoke this violence (on the part of the authorities through the police), knowing that this violence will be publicly condemned and may advance the demonstrators' cause.
Because implicitly provoking violence is already a form of violence, and in no way non-violence. In this area, the line between violence and non-violence can sometimes seem very thin, leading to misunderstandings. Once we better understand the functioning guided by power relations, we are better able to make truly non-violent choices.

Asking is therefore very different from demanding/requiring and seeking to use force to obtain what one wants. Accepting in advance the possibility of refusal puts us in the right frame of mind to adjust our approach. First of all, there is the possibility of repeating the request. But there are also all kinds of possibilities to make evolve the request, with perseverance, in order to make it more acceptable to the other party, or to give the other party time to accept the request, and sometimes also to give ourselves time to put a little water in the wine.

I am not giving specific examples for more personal situations, but we all encounter them. For, letting go of the balance of power has to take place at all levels, not just at the civic and political levels. We encounter situations in all areas of our lives that trigger harmful emotions.

> Note: In reality, it is not the emotions themselves that are harmful, but rather their persistence and the fact that we are unconscious of all this.
> I use the term "harmful" because, until we learn to recognise and manage them properly, they distort our reasoning, lead us to act blindly, and cause us unnecessary suffering by functioning in vicious circle. As a result, they do not serve us and cause us harm. It is therefore the persistence of emotions that is harmful and the fact that we are unconscious of this process.
> Otherwise, emotions have a fundamentally positive role when we learn to recognise them, manage them and use them as a source of constructive action, as they can help us clarify our needs.

And it is almost always possible to bounce back smoothly and constructively. This can be learned, and the more you master this learning process, the more situations you will be able to apply it to.

iii Making evolve requests and proposals while going through failures and by learning from our mistakes

When faced with a social, relational or collective situation that frustrates, upsets or angers us, or is harmful to us or others, and whose resolution depends on the cooperation or decision of a third party or entity, if we want to be able to accept it and continue to make proposals to resolve it, without without running around in all directions or trying to force the issue, this will require us, on an individual level, to move away from impulsive actions and open ourselves up to greater creativity. And it also requires confidence, perseverance and determination.

And when what we propose is acceptable to everyone, we can usually sense it. But to get there, we often need to have the patience to experiment, adapt and rework the project in every possible way before it can spread. In a way, as long as what we propose is not accepted, it is in our interest to review our work, to improve it each time or to find something else to propose. So perseverance and determination are not the same as stubbornness. Perseverance means persisting in a direction, but continuing to evolve, to innovate, to be able to change course while maintaining the same intention. And it is precisely the acceptance of remaining and maintaining the status quo that allows us the flexibility and patience to continue questioning and evolving our approach. Because when we remain in a rebellious mindset, opposing others, we can only limit ourselves to one solution, our own, the only one possible. And this

Manichaeism keeps us in a power struggle, because it denies us access to creativity and intuition, and provokes refusal and defensiveness in others, leading to an escalation of misunderstanding on one side and in the demanding/requiring and obstinate attitudes of the other; these are the pillars of the balance of power and stagnation of evolution.

However, the use of perseverance and patience in the face of adversity is a way of functioning that takes time to implement. For it involves an evolution not only in individual behaviour, but also in mentality. And this is achieved through experience, trial and error, sometimes with failures that require us to start all over again, here or elsewhere.

In a way, when we abandon the rigid attitude of demand/requiring, of expecting an immediate response that suits us, beyond negotiation and mediation as well; we begin to put ourselves in the frame of mind to tame the situation and seek answers that go beyond the black-and-white framework, in order to choose from a whole palette of colours.

iv Accepting, in some cases, the other person's solution that does not satisfy us, but can lead to our goals

As we saw in Chapter 4, a solution that does not work, however rational it may be, is not a solution. When we are unable to get our point of view accepted, it is sometimes much more beneficial to accept this fact and accept the solutions proposed by others, knowing that it may be less effective, slower, more difficult or more frustrating, but that it will nevertheless lead us to achieve our goal. And if our thirst for power leads us to want to impose our point of view, our humility and patience can, on the contrary, lead us to lower our demands/requirements and avoid unnecessary confrontation, with the aim of achieving the common goal and maintaining trust and harmony.

e - Getting into the right frame of mind

Even before privileging the mental attitudes as described above, in order to ward off the balance of power, it is important to:

- accept,
- persevere in asking,
- making evolve requests and proposals, while going through failures, and learning from our mistakes,
- accepting, in some cases, the solution coming from the other person, that does not satisfy us, but can lead to our objectives being achieved;

it is also necessary to put ourselves in the right frame of mind to open up new perspectives and achieve the fulfilment of our intention. The true non-violent attitude, the one that leaves the balance of power behind, lies essentially in the intention at the source of a project, a request, a proposal, a will for change. This intention can be recognised in several aspects, which partially overlap or influence each other:

1. determination
2. absence of demands/requirements
3. absence of urgency
4. a form of self-knowledge
5. detachment
6. the presence of doubts in confidence
7. Respect and absolute kindliness

It is the intention that will define the choice of means to achieve the objectives. It is the intention that will determine, based on these seven aspects, whether or not we abandon the inadequate reasoning. It is the

intention, therefore, that carries within it all the potential for the transformation to be achieved, and this requires a whole learning process to become capable of adopting behaviours modelled on such an intention, in as many situations as possible.

i Determination

Whatever the circumstances – the response to our actions or requests – it is essential to maintain our objectives. This means that it is important to maintain the best possible attitude in the face of denial, refusal, indifference, violence or even failure. Whatever obstacles we encounter, if necessary, we will have to redo our work 100 times over. And it is our creativity, intuition, inspiration, experience and perseverance that will dictate the necessary changes to the means we use to achieve these goals. In this sense, while demands/requirements, revenge, indignation and feelings of injustice may be at the source of our desire to act, they cannot be the driving force behind our intentions and behaviour.

And it may be that our journey leads us to evolve in our intentions and change them after all. But in this case, it will not be for lack of determination, because it will not be a matter of giving up or renouncing, but rather of reorienting our objectives to adapt them to circumstances, both external and internal.

ii The absence of requirement

If we do not act within the framework of a power relationship, it becomes impossible to require anything. Distinguishing between a request and a demand/requirement is therefore also part of the learning process. We all know this in theory. But putting it into practice is quite another matter. When we move away from behaviour based on demands/requirements, we often no longer even make requests: we take other paths.
Another difference that can be difficult to perceive is the difference between demanding/requirements and setting boundaries. Non-cooperation is a way of setting boundaries, as long as the intention behind it is not to directly impact the behaviour, choices and actions of the other person (regardless of the level at which this occurs). If I refuse to cooperate in order to get the other person to eventually follow my idea, I am not setting my limits, but rather playing a game of blackmail.
If, on the other hand, I do not cooperate because cooperating goes against my convictions, and I am not trying to elicit a reaction from the other person, then I am staying within a process that is further removed from the balance of power.
It is the way in which we refuse to cooperate that will enable the person (or group, or nation) we are dealing with to understand the register in which we are acting, with or without demands/requirements.
Even if, very often, non-cooperation is understood as blackmail, or even aggression, by those who feel wronged or confronted by this non-cooperation.

I would like to illustrate this aspect in the context of the feminist "struggle", and more specifically during an event that took place in 2020 at the César Awards ceremony in Paris. This example does not provide a solution, but it illustrates very profoundly how the demand, requirement for change cannot be heard, leading to resistance and the persistence of the problematic situation:

French film professionals have demonstrated the inertia of mentalities and the ineffectiveness of denunciations of certain big names in the media.
Faced with sexual abuse in the industry, feminist actions have called for change, even demanded it. Women have demonstrated, spoken out, expressed their outrage and filed complaints, but the mentality that allowed these abuses to occur and has protected their perpetrators until now is not ready to evolve. *"What you resist persists*." The 45th César Awards ceremony in February 2020 was a striking demonstration of this. In this particular case, the media had reported on the denunciations, and the ceremony's presentation kept

coming back to this theme as if the issue had been resolved and was almost a thing of the past. And yet the majority of professionals, including women, voted and awarded one of the most prestigious César Awards to one of the protagonists of these alleged abuses.

This is a common mistake. Sometimes, indeed, denouncing is enough to bring about a change of course, because when the evidence is clear, it becomes impossible to ignore it. But this is not an absolute rule, as denial and power games can interfere. And at the César Awards, it was clearly demonstrated that the lines had not yet moved. There is still a long way to go.

In the context of male domination, it is important to understand that men – and quite a few complacent women – will not understand and change just because we ask them to. The more we ask them, the more they will resist. Even if, on the surface, they put on a good show as if they understood perfectly well.

It is up to women to question the roles they accept to play in this game that does not suit them and where they are not respected. Because accepting the role while asking to be respected is not so different from agreeing to enter the bedroom and ultimately being abused. And cinema, and the denunciations currently taking place in it, is nothing more than a metaphor for the broader reality of male domination: the tip of the iceberg.

For this is part of a broader context, where only extreme violence and injustice are visible, such as rape, femicide, harassment, genital mutilation, and other abuses and assaults; these are only the brutal and blatant signs of a less visible, darker and more pernicious reality that all women suffer, and that we have all, both men and women, integrated as part of reality.

Women will not change men. For decades, the most militant feminists have believed they could do so, and they continue to be repeatedly slapped in the face by the absolute inertia of mentalities. If the rules of the game are not fair, it is not those who benefit from them who should be asked to abolish them, but those who suffer the damage caused by them who must learn to stop following them. And when not everybody follows the same rules, the game will evolve. And only then will the questioning concern everyone.

And in order to stop submitting to the roles imposed on us by men and society, there are questions to be asked and awareness to be raised by women beforehand. And that takes time.

For example, as long as we accept suffering in order to be beautiful (read: to show ourselves as something we are not in order to be loved by men), we will also be forced to accept suffering from not being respected. And it is the same thing. As long as women continue to follow the rules of the game imposed by a society that gives all privileges and power to men, they will suffer all kinds of abuse.

Women have completely internalised a great deal of unspoken rules, injunctions and self-doubt – completely unconsciously – and it is not by demanding an end to injustice or by rebelling that they will win their case. It is by clearing away, one by one, these behaviours that are complacent with machismo, and by ceasing to participate in what does not suit them, that they will succeed.

To avoid any misunderstanding, this is not about refusing to denounce the worst crimes and injustices committed against women, or refusing to demand laws that could reduce or eliminate them. It is much more about stopping submitting to implicit laws without having to demand that those who benefit from them or who are complacent in this regard change their behaviour.

Expecting abusers to lose the recognition of their peers after denouncing their abuse is not effective (with some exceptions). Leaving the game is much more effective. But it is not always clear that this option corresponds to our real intentions, and it is certainly not the easiest to adopt.

I cannot claim that we should never fight against certain forms of domination. But it is better to do so consciously, according to the urgency of the situation, and in circumstances where survival is at stake. In any other situation, to learn to avoid falling back on our instinctive reactions and draw on all our other faculties, overcoming the impatience that urges us to act.

When we get frustrated by a situation we don't like, we are more likely to get out of it by questioning our own attitude, our own intentions, and the means we want to use to leave it, than by demanding outright that it stop when we have no authority over the person or people at the source of it. And to do that, we also need to question our impatience.

iii The absence of urgency

For, when faced with facts, such as events, behaviours or circumstances that we find unacceptable, and apart from serious cases related to survival or severe suffering, if we want to break out of the balance of power, the attitude we adopt cannot be dictated by urgency, whether real or not. This requires accepting – in the short term – the harmful consequences of not having a solution, knowing that this is the price to pay for a real and lasting solution to emerge. Because getting out of this situation by force is like trying to keep a lid on a petrol tank exposed to flames rather than putting out the source of the flames. This is all the more true given that, in most cases, the urgency is just an illusion.

When we are caught up in an event that triggers emotions that drain our mental energy, it is imperative to wait until the emotion has subsided sufficiently before deciding to act. This is usually very difficult because it is the emotion that dictates our actions and imposes a sense of urgency on us. This is where the effect of meditation can come into play. By generating a more serene or detached mental and emotional state, it can transform us mentally and emotionally to the point where we are able to take enough distance to experience the emotion without believing the thoughts that dictate that we must act quickly. Because if we don't take the trouble to pay attention to the emotion by observing it, accepting it, going through it, and even working on it, then the little monkey in our mind will automatically take over and lead us towards probably inappropriate action or, if we are unable to act, towards rumination. The latter will have the effect, on the one hand, of maintaining or even increasing the emotion and, on the other hand, lead us into pseudo-rational reasoning (because it is altered by the presence of emotion), which will lead us to errors of judgement, inappropriate understandings of the situation, and therefore to take inappropriate, even downright harmful actions towards ourselves and others.

Refusing to act on our sense of urgency obviously cannot apply to all situations. For, when the harmful consequences are serious and immediate, it is practically impossible to be patient and calmly say that we do not want to act rashly. However, even in these circumstances, it is sometimes better to practise acceptance and patience and act differently. This is because acting in a demanding and violent manner often does not guarantee that we will get what we want and can, on the contrary, create resistance to our reaction and aggravate the situation.

iv Harnessing the emotion without acting under its hold

If we manage to learn to postpone our actions when our emotional switch is activated (the presence of emotions and ruminations are indicators of this), we will be better able to base our actions or responses on calmness. We will then be able to develop a different attitude thanks to the experience of these same emotions that we will have calmed. This will give us motivation and energy, help us clarify our needs and intentions, and, as a result, connect us to our intuition and creativity to develop our response to the event that triggered the switch. This response will then be significantly different, much more constructive, more effective, and often imbued with wisdom and kindness.
It is therefore an extremely enriching learning experience, which cannot be enjoyed by people who act on impulse, who block their emotions, or who look for ways to avoid experiencing them fully. This is where more constructive reactions stand out from those that are purely rational and deny emotions. The presence of emotions is not harmful at all if we learn to use them correctly (not impulsively). Because it is precisely these emotions that can guide us, shaping our rational thinking to make it better suited to reality. For reality always involves emotional, psychological and relational aspects that rationality alone cannot handle.

v A form of self-knowledge

Self-knowledge, which is necessary to avoid power struggles, consists of the ability to recognise, observe, accept and work through our inappropriate thoughts and emotions triggered in a given situation, without falling into the trap of believing them and using them to act in relation to that situation.
It is about having the ability, lucidity and clear-sightedness. It consists of being conscious when the glass has been shaken and the sediment has mixed with the water, and not using the sediment to feed our reasoning and behaviour. It is the acceptance of our shadow side. Distancing ourselves from our thoughts is the result of a learning process (see my article on this subject : "your thinking is not you" [256] - [see Ref J]).
And that is no small feat. It can involve a real re-education. Not only by unravelling a large part of our belief system, but above all by deactivating many of the automatic thought processes that are its corollary. Beyond that, it also requires a kind of mental and psychological hygiene to be maintained.
And for future generations, these lessons could simply become part of their education, which would then spare them the hard work of questioning themselves as adults.

vi Detachment

Detachment is the attitude that stems from this self-knowledge. It consists of not clinging to our emotions and thoughts that create urgency, the desire for demands, the desire for revenge; and which lead to untimely and violent actions. It is the ability to know that reality lies beyond the boundaries of the glass in which we find ourselves (i.e. the situation that concerns us), and that we cannot see beyond it when the mixture is made opaque by the mud. And that acting rightly, in reality, cannot be done based on the colour of the water when there is a storm in that glass of water. This requires waiting for the mud to settle, regardless of the consequences in the glass of water. It is therefore a matter of being conscious that what concerns us is interlocked in a situation much larger than the glass in which we find ourselves. This is the most difficult part, because when we are trapped in a difficult, panicky or unfair situation that involves strong emotions, these emotions completely mask reality and create a situation that can be compared to a mirage, in which any action can only be wrong. Detachment is therefore the ability to face a mirage of thoughts and emotions, to keep in mind that it is a psychological effect, and not to believe our interpretation of the situation we are facing at that moment.

vii The presence of doubt in confidence

Acting with confidence while maintaining doubts is the result of the previous points. As long as we cannot achieve the lucidity that allows us clear-sightedness in the face of the difficulties we encounter, it is essential to maintain doubts, both about our perception of them and about how we want to respond to them. If we know that we are in a storm in a glass of water – even if it is the size of global warming, for example – it is dangerous to rush headlong into resolving what concerns us. When our ideas for solutions are inspired by mud, emotions, or our own demands, they will not last over time. Conversely, a real solution, adapted to reality, will impose itself on our minds over time. It will become more refined in its conception. And the presence of doubts will not divert us from it. And It is persistence over time, because we find it adequate and give ourselves time to refine it, that will allow us, despite our doubts, to be confident that this solution is right. And that, even if, seemingly, at first, it is rejected by those to whom we propose it, or even if it does not bear fruit; it remains right.

viii Absolute respect and kindliness

If the solution is good and suited to reality, it will be good for everyone. It may frustrate those who were at the root of the problem, but it will not be unfair to them. This is why, over time, they will eventually accept it and it will prove to be lasting.
To illustrate this, we can look at all the issues related to racism, discrimination, segregation, apartheid and slavery. Resolving such issues takes generations, but those who were at the root of them also benefit from the change. They may no longer have a workforce exploited at will, a punching bag to take out their frustrations on, or a scapegoat on whom to project all their resentment, but they benefit from a human and cultural enrichment that is far greater than all of that.

f - When the balance of power recede, empathy and solidarity can emerge

Moving away from attitudes that involve power struggles will help us to understand reality differently and to use our capacity for empathy more often and more consciously when we are faced with difficulties, while becoming able to approach a situation from different points of view.

Our perception of reality is different for each of us and is influenced by our environment: our education, our background, our culture, our geographical location, our living conditions, etc. And all of this can make reality appear in completely different shades depending on the colour of the glasses we wear. Whether we are politically left-wing or right-wing, violent or pacifist, environmentalist, capitalist or anarchist, we are all right in a way. When we disagree with someone's opinion, it is usually not so much because they are wrong, but because we are looking at reality, like the inside of a house, through different windows, and depending on whether the window overlooks the living room, the bedroom, the attic or the corridor, our descriptions of reality can be completely opposite to each other.

And in this context, when a difficulty arises and we need to agree – based on our opposing reasoning – in order to overcome it, we have seen that traditionally we are only able to conceive of two paths open to us. Or rather, two tendencies: when faced with the opinion of our opponent, which we consider threatening. The first possibility is to try to prevent them from asserting their opinion and/or to impose our own. In this case, the means we will use – depending on our status in relation to them – will be force, violence, coercion, manipulation, and lies. And alternatively, if we are unable to use such means or if they are ineffective, we are left with no choice but to flee the situation, submit to it, or accept a form of status quo, or even lasting conflict.

The alternative is to become capable of changing our glasses, shifting our gaze from one or more windows, and questioning our reasoning. This does not mean denying or abandoning our position, but

rather allowing ourselves to question it and open up to other possible ways of thinking. Only then can we choose to approach the other person differently, this time with empathy. We can learn to stop basing our behaviour, thoughts and opinions on our fears and anger, even when these remain very much present. We will then need to accept them and also accept that we have to go through them. This will lead us to understand the other person's reasoning, without necessarily agreeing with it, but without judging them or trying to prevent them from thinking that way.

If we manage to adopt this kind of mental, intellectual and emotional attitude, even in situations of major crisis, even if the balance of power is not in our favour, we then enter into the realm of the heart, empathy and non-violence. The other person is no longer seen as an adversary, rival or threat. We become capable of interpreting their behaviour and opinions not according to our usual frame of reference, but according to theirs. This will not necessarily lead us to agree with them, but it can enable us to understand them and no longer feel threatened, indignant, betrayed or otherwise, and also to stop misjudging the situation.

The intention behind this attitude is much more altruistic because it takes the other person's interests into account on the same level as our own, or even as a priority over our own. By putting our fears, anger and pride aside, we become capable of connecting with others. This is easier with people we love, but can still be difficult at times. It is much more complicated with people we are indifferent to, strangers, and especially those towards whom we have accumulated a lot of resentment.

This is the one and only path that will enable us to move toward constructive, satisfactory, and lasting solutions. It may take more time and require a great deal of effort, energy and even suffering at first, but not necessarily. And it sometimes means being prepared to lose a lot before breaking the deadlock. This approach requires great control over thoughts and emotions, a great capacity to accept what is, an ability to be open and kind to all, and solid self-confidence.
But it is the only approach that leads to fair and lasting solutions and ultimately breaks down confrontations by creating genuine bonds.

And as we evolve, our own attitudes may well help those we interact with to operate in the same way as us, even if this is never guaranteed.

Thus, the more people who practise these ways of functioning, and manage to practise them more and more and better and better, the more it will bring others to join them. This means that at a certain level of evolution in population groups, new attitudes will be much easier to integrate and live by. Because when the person, group of people, or community we are dealing with operates on the same wavelength as us, not only do they cease to be adversaries and become partners, but trust can be established and solutions can diversify and become much easier to accept in our minds.

Leaving behind our attitudes based on the balance of power also helps to develop individual freedom while showing greater respect for the freedoms of others and increasing expressions of solidarity. The whole context of our interactions in life will then be reorganised.

We can trust human nature. We are social beings, so we will never tend to isolate ourselves unless forced to do so. And when we live in society, if our level of consciousness rises and we abandon power struggles, we will be led to want to voluntarily take part in these new types of social functioning.

g - Moving towards the heart

In reality, it is not so much a question of striving to leave power struggles behind as it is of trying to function with the heart. Becoming conscious of power struggles will of course help, and is even essential. But the real path is achieved by nourishing our thoughts and emotions with the energy of the heart.

For as long as our minds are influenced – without us being conscious of it – by all kinds of external sources, and are also dependent on our conditioning and addictions, we drift and do not have a good grasp of situations.

When solving a problem or carrying out a project is long and exhausting, and obstacles keep piling up, it is clear that we are not taking the right approach or in the right frame of mind. The accumulation of obstacles is a clear sign that we need to shift our perspective on the situation that concerns us.

If we connect with our hearts, all we have to do is go with the flow.
Experience will lead us to better understand the flaws in reasoning that underlie the problems we encounter.

Only the heart can bring us back to our senses. However, to understand this, it is imperative to step outside of Cartesian logic, as no argument will be able to convince us. Experience is necessary to grasp this aspect. And it is then that our understanding of reality, and our way of reacting to it, will be able to evolve.

It is a phenomenon that everyone can experience: when we stop giving priority to purely rational thinking (without excluding it altogether) and give the reins back to the heart (and this is not really a metaphor, because on a biological level, this is exactly what happens, as the heart is also richly innervated); we access another form of intelligence, another way of functioning, and it is from this that the ideas and attitudes that will yield the best results in response to a given situation will emerge. This mental attitude does not exclude rationality, which means that the reasoning that results from it is not rationally very different from a mental attitude that functions in free wheel mode. On the other hand, what clearly differentiates heart-led initiatives is that they bear fruit, lead to success, and spread and flourish in the long term without having to be imposed in any way, i.e. without resorting to the balance of power.

It is also, and above all, the amount of time and energy required to achieve a goal that makes the difference between actions guided by the heart and those that are not. For when the heart is in control, creativity and collective intelligence can flourish. There is no more struggle, no more fight. We do not have to force ourselves to do anything, because motivation and energy then carry the action effortlessly, with fluidity, balance and confidence. And the impact on reality and on other people is significantly greater. This state of mind leads us to shine, to have a form of charisma and to influence positively, without any tendency to manipulate. We then possess a power that is no longer based on force and opposition. It is a power that leads us to act with, and for, those we otherwise call our adversaries, and which can lead them to do the same.
I think this state is related to what is called the "flow state". This state leads us to be passionate about what we do, without noticing the passage of time, being hyper-focused, totally efficient, super-motivated, where the course of action is the opposite of protocols and rules, and much more guided by intuition and creativity. And where lucidity of action is extreme and constant throughout. It is a state that does not tire you, and where some feel guided by something greater than themselves. Because we manage to achieve or imagine things that we would not be capable of doing in our everyday lives. It is a state from which we emerge full of satisfaction and sometimes even wonder, both in terms of the result and the pleasure we took in achieving it. No negative emotions can affect us in this state of mind.

To find out more about the flow state, see Wikipedia [257].

Another slightly different, more scientific and broader explanation, which puts the above into perspective, is offered in the following article by Arjun Walia: *"Scientists Show How Gratitude Literally Alters The Human Heart & Molecular Structure Of The Brain"* [258]. The article focuses on the topic of gratitude as studied in universities, mainly in the United States. It mentions the hierarchical link between the brain and

the heart via neural connections. It has been observed and measured that stress and negative emotions disrupt the heart rhythm, which in turn reduces the quality of mental functions (at the level of the cortex). And in the presence of positive emotions, mental functions are stimulated, as are calmness and well-being. Furthermore, practising cardiac coherence and seeking to live according to the language of the heart allows us to radiate socially in a different way, and this can be measured. The article mentions that if enough individuals raise their level of coherence, we can expect this to lead to global coherence. This increases our individual responsibility for the functioning of society.

Functioning more with the heart is indeed the source of change. Symbolically, this means strengthening it as developing a muscle, i.e. developing the internal connections and harmony between the heart and the brain. To better understand this aspect, I suggest you watch the following video by Gregg Braden, *"The Science of Heart-Brain Harmony with Gregg Braden"* [259] - [see Ref 22], which discusses recent and surprising information about the neurological functioning of the heart in connection with the brain - the heart being, in turn, a small brain. To illustrate his point, he gives the astonishing example of a heart transplant, after which it became impossible to ignore the memory linked to the heart.

Working to develop functioning by the heart can be done through meditation, but there are many other methods or techniques that can help. I can only mention those that I know and practise. The first that comes to mind is Joe Dispenza's teaching: see the summary of his book *"You are the placebo"* that I wrote [260] - [see Ref K] - even if I do not agree with his entire approach (especially the price).
There is also the technique of cardiac coherence, which, through the management of breathing and thoughts, regulates heart rate variation and thus helps to harmonise breathing, heart and mind: see Véronique Lachenaud's article (in French) *"La cohérence cardiaque"* on the Passeport Santé website (2022) [261] - [see Ref 41]. Regular practice improves health in many ways and helps you to better manage stress, thoughts and emotions, making it easier to navigate everyday events. There are many videos online to help you practise. The 3-6-5 technique: 3 times a day, 6 breaths of 5 seconds each is the simplest to practise.
Here is another technique proposed by Gregg Braden, a more accessible form of cardiac coherence, which, despite the very rational discourse proposed, allows you to directly experience consciousness in the heart. It is explained in a video [262] - [see Ref 23], (which can be linked to Gregg Braden's more theoretical video on the subject, presented earlier in the text.
I would also like to mention Ashok Gupta's programme once again [263] - [see Ref 24]. This method is designed to help heal various syndromes, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and long Covid. The interest of this programme lies in the wide range of information, techniques and advice it offers, which are universal in nature and only partially found in other methods. I am thinking in particular of several of the techniques and guided meditations it offers (including the *"Surrender"* and *"Soften & Flow"* meditations). They are truly effective in helping you return to your heart, calm your mind and regain serenity. These techniques and meditations have almost magical, or at least very surprising, effects and allow you to consciously and permanently (sometimes in several separate exercises) let go of recurring and destructive negative thoughts and emotions in order to truly connect with your heart. These techniques can also have an effect comparable to EMDR [264] and EFT [265] that are both briefly explained in my article (in French) *"Managing thoughts - Managing emotions"* [266] - [see Ref G], ; two much better known energy psychology techniques. EMDR is generally used to heal psychological trauma, while EFT works on a much broader spectrum to manage stress, emotions and thoughts, as well as certain symptoms and pain.
I would also like to mention Dawnson Church's Eco-meditation [267], available on the website [see Ref 25]. This 22-minute meditation makes it fairly easy to calm the mind, achieve cardiac coherence, and focus on the heart and the feelings associated with it. This establishes a calmer, more positive, more empathetic state of mind during the hours following the practice, thereby allowing to be less impacted by events that can generate negative emotions.

All these methods and techniques can be an important toolkit, because the more you use them, the better their effects. And there are probably dozens of others.

Unfortunately, methods or teachings are often offered at a high cost, because those who initiate them do not yet really consider them to be for the common good, and some operate purely on a commercial basis: the price of some of these courses will tell you more.
On the other hand, EFT is completely free and can be learned through videos on the internet, books or from friends. Ashok Gupta's programme does have a cost, but it is reasonable compared to what is offered elsewhere, and it is offered through a non-profit organisation. Dawnson Church's Ecomeditation is available free of charge on the internet (it also exists in French, but for a fee), and Gregg Braden's technique is also free.
Conversely, methods that are truly unaffordable can only benefit an elite few, when everyone should be able to enjoy them as they are for the common good. It is regrettable that profit plays such a dominant role in the field of personal evolution.

In addition to certain guided meditations, techniques, psychological knowledge, or neuroscience, it is also possible to simply work on nurturing positive thoughts: consciously visualising intentions for the future, being generous and kind, giving the best of oneself, being grateful (doing gratitude exercises), praying (not necessarily in a religious context).
Practising all of this allows us to realise how much it develops our heart's faculties, how much it influences our reason and reduces suffering, and how much it increases our optimism, capacity for happiness and indulgence towards others.
It is important to trust the guidance provided by experience itself, and therefore not to blindly follow everything that is suggested to us. The idea is to try things out, vary the exercises, and let ourselves be guided by our intuition and the effects this has on us. It is up to each individual to find their own path.

And when we exercise the capacities of the heart, we can then observe around us that familiar events will unfold differently, that people will react differently to us, that we will meet new people, or that we will interact differently with those around us. We will also notice that people no longer interact with us in the same way (whether this is because we are meeting new people or because the way we interact with those around us has changed). And this is where we can see that our evolution has the indirect consequence of causing others to evolve, provided, however, that this was not our intention.

It is not a foregone conclusion that enough of us will be able to make the shift to the heart in time, on a large scale, because the dysfunctions in society and the role of negative influences are not going to stop anytime soon, and they strongly push us to stay on track, to degrade our behaviour and to lose the consciousness of who we really are. To better visualise this description, I suggest you watch the video clip by Moby & The Void Pacific Choir entitled *"Are You Lost In The World Like Me"* (2016) [268] - [see Ref 13].

However, whatever happens, I think that this choice and this path are essential for those who reach the level of consciousness necessary to consider them.

And this level of consciousness crucially involves the ability to try to know the issues around us on the one hand, and on the other, to know the part of ourselves that participates in them, ceasing to deny our responsibility in this scenario. And it is even more fundamental then to direct our energy towards the constructive part of the work of evolution that needs to be done.

I cannot overemphasise the importance of taking our shadow side into account. But what is essential to understand is that, in order to help us achieve our goals or to persuade others to cooperate with us and relinquish their power, what is needed is neither a stick nor even a carrot, but a genuine source of motivation. And this is precisely where the reasons of the heart come in.

But what is essential to understand is that, in order to help us achieve our goals or to persuade others to cooperate with us and relinquish their power, what is needed is neither a stick nor even a carrot, but a genuine source of motivation. And this is precisely where the reasons of the heart come into play.

And motivating our actions and intentions with the heart is only part of the task. Reaching others through the heart is the other part, by giving, sharing, spreading, without expectation. Because nothing can ever be taken for granted. Some people are so blinded by their fears, habits, conditioning, thirst for power, or even perversity that they cannot be reached by our kindliness, and may even lead us to get back to similar attitudes through a mirror effect. On the other hand, if they are receptive to our intentions, their motivation to cooperate will be greatly increased.

For, when relationships are marked by respect, cooperation and even admiration, they are not only much more motivating and lead to greater success, but they also give much more meaning to each of our behaviours and, more generally, to our lives.

And all this has a ripple effect. Where we participate in models where collective intelligence functions fully, we can no longer choose to revert to our old behaviours based on power relations. For the privileges that these behaviours generate are insignificant compared to the quality of relationships and achievements attained in communities governed by true collaboration.

We stop to content ourselves with mediocrity once we have come to know excellence. And it is impossible to achieve this excellence without growing in consciousness and giving up the privileges that only give a facade of happiness, pleasing our minds but not our hearts. It is therefore the intelligence of the heart that will lead us to make concessions in our unbridled materialism. And bringing material sobriety back into our lives requires less effort if it is motivated more by the heart and shared with others than if it is motivated by arguments and done alone.

Any model of success adopted by some will quickly be imitated by others, and this can only spread until it becomes widespread.

h - Changing

Changing therefore no longer consists of ‘fighting against’ what is wrong. Because fighting is part of the reaction and way of thinking that perpetuates failure, conflict and all other difficulties – even if it is what all opponents use. Changing then consists of moving away from or abandoning what is wrong and building something completely different alongside it, as if it were nothing, with a mindset that has nothing to do with the problem.
Changing also means reconnecting with who we were before, or rather who we really are. Freeing ourselves from our addictions, disidentifying ourselves from violence and power games, reconnecting with our hearts and intuition, being able to put rationality on the back burner (and every technological race that goes with it), understanding that our thoughts can all too often lead us astray, being much clearer about our emotions, etc.
And finally, changing also means understanding that what is wrong on the outside is only a reflection of what is wrong on the inside. And since we have complete power over the inside, this has repercussions on the outside.

Because when we look at ourselves closely enough, we discover the world.
This may seem like the height of egocentricity. And yet, when we start to solve our own problems, at some point we become truly concerned about the problems of others, about the problems of the world.

And that's when we begin to truly understand that our inner problems mirror the problems of the outside world. And our understanding of things and of the world becomes very different. And it goes even further. Because our inner transformation allows us to realise that it intrinsically transforms our physical and relational environment, because in a way, it is a projection of our inner workings. And once we begin to change it, our actions on the outside begin to have a completely different impact, in the form of new solutions that are this time real solutions, or at least more often better solutions, which no longer lead us back to difficulties, and which, in the long term, bear fruit and are accepted.

And it can go even further. When we begin to consciously invest our bright side, through presence, kindliness, gratitude and self-giving, it connects us to something transcendent, it links us to the whole, to the best of ourselves, to something divine (or the divine part of ourselves, or our higher self).
Our inner world then expands into new dimensions.

We can then measure how far we have come from our old modes of functioning, dealing with each of our problems, which were based on power struggles, materialism and urgency, and which too often led us to deceive ourselves, misplaced our priorities, and obtained scattered, slow, mixed, superficial, partial, temporary results that cost us a great deal of energy and time, required many concessions, and never fully satisfied us. They required us to keep fighting to maintain them, always with the risk of falling back. (Note: if you do not recognise yourself in this description, it may be that you were already naturally in the heart, or conversely that you are one of the powerful, part of a dominant caste, who can get whatever they want at the cost of the submission and suffering of those who serve them.)

And the more people who manage to shift their mentality, the easier it becomes for others to make this change.

Described in this way, it may seem idyllic and at the same time illusory. Yet it already exists, and the more successes there are, the easier it becomes to achieve them, and the more it allows others to have access to them.
The idea is not to try to embody new behaviours everywhere and all the time, because not all situations allow us to act in this way; but rather to choose to move more and more in this direction. And the more we refine our learning in this area, the more situations there are in which we can practise it.

i - Our shadow side is our ally

Some trainers, authors, and spiritual guides set love against fear. We should put aside our fears and learn to love instead. I partly agree. We can heal many of our irrational fears. But fear remains a healthy emotion. And we are also capable of learning to live with our fears, without diverting this emotion to externalise its causes that lead to feed our feelings of hatred and our tendency to judge.
What is important is to learn to live with fear, to know how to manage it, to know that it is our responsibility, to be able to admit it and show our vulnerability sometimes, to show ourselves to be trustworthy, to learn to trust more often, to calm the fears of others, to support them if they cannot manage it, and thus to create more and more places, relationships and opportunities where fear does not control our actions and decisions, while remaining aware of its presence and being able to calm it in ourselves and in others.

In this sense, our shadow side is our ally. It is not a question of making it disappear, fighting against it or denying it, but rather of accepting it, learning to live with it, even learning to listen to it without submitting to the impulsive acts it dictates, but consciously choosing behaviours influenced by the heart.

j - The difference between understanding and consciousness

Understanding all of the above is not a sign of change and does not allow us to free ourselves from the balance of power. For the intellectual understanding of the process precedes the conscious understanding. And the adoption of new behaviours only comes with consciousness. And consciousness rarely awakens with a single click. Each new situation we have the opportunity to experience will enable us to take another step forward, rarely long distances.
In my case, I have been able to write all of the above because I have understood its intellectual content. And every day brings me a little more understanding. But that does not mean that I always act with complete serenity, without experiencing doubts, making the right choices and adopting the best behaviours. I still often struggle with my own demons, ruminating over and over again with reasoning based on a certain seemingly rational logic, although it is imbued and influenced by emotions that lead me away from my goals. This path is long and never-ending.

There is a real practical learning process to be undertaken. And it is this process that will engrave our understanding at the level of experience. Our resistance to life's uncertainties, to the behaviour of those around us that we do not agree with, will cause us to cling to power struggles and find no other means of resolving conflicts or disagreements than through our power, our submission, our escape, or even manipulation.

Along the way, we will be confronted with situations where we will be convinced that we are acting consciously, honestly and with great kindliness, when in fact we are still following our usual patterns.

Or, conversely, we will intellectually understand the inadequacy of our attitudes in a given situation, yet remain powerless to find our way to more appropriate behaviours.

But we will quickly see progress in environments that are favourable to us. For it will be much easier for us to act with our hearts (empathy, indulgence, compassion) towards people we understand, appreciate and who respond to us with kindliness. However, improving our behaviour in a favourable environment does not guarantee our ability to do so in other situations. For the challenge is much greater when it comes to reacting in the same way to those we do not understand, or who do not understand us, who abuse their power over us, manipulate us, betray us, ignore us, despise us, or disregard us.
When faced with these attitudes, it is much more difficult not to mirror or echo them, not to be caught up in our automatic responses, not to let old wounds and old blockages resurface, which will lead us straight back to our old habits of reacting impulsively and negatively. Because then we will be trapped either in wanting to “return the favour”, or at the very least in not being passive, by resisting, elbowing our way through, manoeuvring, showing disdain... In short, by forgetting our goodwill. Or we will position ourselves as victims, by running away, submitting, remaining silent, feeling powerless, somatising, or even giving up on our goals.

The learning process consists of becoming increasingly conscious of this old tendency to react or flee when faced with increasingly difficult situations; and also to become increasingly able to stop our impulsive reaction or paralysis, and take the time (by temporarily removing ourselves from the situation when possible) to walk the necessary path to position ourselves constructively and calmly, with our hearts this time, and in consciousness of what we are doing.

It's quite a programme, but it's so worth it. And the further we manage to progress along this path, the more we help those around us to function in the same way, without having to travel the same path. That's the bonus gift that this journey brings: not only does it benefit us directly, but it also intrinsically benefits everyone around us, on the one hand through our more conciliatory attitudes, and on the other hand because these attitudes lead them to mirror our behaviour and help those who benefit from it to become more conciliatory with their own loved ones, quite naturally, without having to make any particular effort.

And this learning process is not a struggle against ourselves. It is not a matter of forcing ourselves to act better, nor of trying to eradicate the behaviours we want to leave behind. This change has two aspects.

The first is to be more conscious of our shadow side, facing it head-on, observing its consequences and accepting them. And this part is actually minimal in terms of how much it occupies our thoughts. But it is immensely important, because without it, change is superficial and temporary, as we are actually allowing our unconscious to continue to guide our steps.

The second aspect is the choice and its implementation, to move towards the heart, positivity, non-violence, confidence, intuition, creativity, emotional intelligence, etc. And this can be worked on through all kinds of techniques and meditations, of which there are thousands (some of which are mentioned above in the text) and which can be learned and used through books, the internet, personal development courses or even therapies. Many of these are freely available (usually online), others are subject to a fee, and some are even prohibitively expensive, which shows that those who teach them have bypassed part of the journey.

k - To gain some perspective

To close this chapter on the release of the balance of power, I would like to mention a very personal hypothesis, which is not necessarily realistic or probable, as billions of other scenarios are potentially possible. Nevertheless, I would like to mention it for the simple purpose of drawing attention to these kind of possibilities. I have chosen to do so by offering a completely different perspective on the issues raised in this document. I hope that this will help to better understand the gap in reasoning that exists between, on the one hand, our current mentality of technological headlong rush in a context of conquest, domination and violence, which, if it were to persist, would inevitably lead us to self-destruction; and, on the other hand, a potential mentality that frees itself from this pursuit of both technology and power. The example chosen goes far beyond the scope of this document, but it allows us to imagine the extent of our inability to understand the damage we are causing by remaining at the psychological stage where we are still stagnating for the moment; and the inevitable evolution we will have to undergo towards letting go of the balance of power in order to move beyond this stage.

So here, as a nod, is the hypothesis of beings from elsewhere visiting Earth.

> *In the history of our universe, since its birth more than 13 billion years ago, thousands of billions of galaxies have formed, each containing hundreds of billions of stars and planets. However, our universe consists only of the part that we have access to imagine or observe, while other planes or dimensions or parallel universes, whose number, size or shape we do not know, cannot be ruled out, both through the testimonies of those who have had partial access to them and through current scientific understanding. We also know that the appearance of life on Earth and the evolution of living beings are not the result of chance, but the work of an intelligence (which most people associate with the divine representation that corresponds to their religion).*
>
> *In this context, it is entirely conceivable that more evolved living beings have developed elsewhere (in the universe, in other universes, or in other dimensions). And if among them there are some who are barely 10,000, 100,000, or even 1 million years ahead of us—which, on the scale of time since the birth of the universe, seems very little; and compared to the scale of our progress over the last 200 years, is, on the contrary, enormous— we can expect these beings to be not only capable of transporting themselves through space without having to travel, but also capable of travelling through time, and no doubt they have also acquired powers of action over matter, telepathy and dozens, hundreds, thousands of other abilities that we are unable to imagine at our own stage of evolution.*

But above all, these living beings have most likely far surpassed the stage of evolution linked to the balance of power, and have therefore attained a wisdom that is still completely inaccessible to us. Based on this hypothesis, I dare to imagine and even hope that they know about Earth and the beings that inhabit it, and that they will be able to help us (probably without our knowledge – and they are likely already helping us, assuming they exist) to overcome the current impasse that is intrinsically linked to (harmful) power struggles.

And if I allow myself to put forward this hypothesis, considering it plausible but not necessarily real, it is because – assuming, therefore, that they do exist – I conceive that, if they are capable of coming to us, it is because they are necessarily much more technologically advanced than we are (or via non-technological capabilities – let us call them 'powers' – which are embryonic in humans or even unknown). And if they have mastered these capabilities, it intrinsically means that they are necessarily also much more psychologically evolved than we are. For if they were not, their technological advances would have destroyed them, just as we are currently on the verge of destroying ourselves. And if they are more evolved than us, they have necessarily overcome the problem of power relations and can no longer have a conquering, colonialist or imperialist mentality. On the contrary, they can only have a mentality of empathy or altruism, far more advanced than what we, as human beings, have access to.

And in this context, it should be noted that our current inability to move beyond the level of power relations leads us to write every possible and imaginable science fiction scenario involving aliens who, by definition, are competitors to humanity and come to Earth in a belligerent manner to conquer, subjugate, invade, exterminate, wage war on us, or even study us, and nothing else.
Whereas, if we think about it for a moment, the probability of this being possible is minimal or non-existent, because anyone who has reached a sufficient level of evolution to be able to reach us from another constellation or galaxy, or even dimension, would also have acquired the wisdom not to seek to attack us, and probably not to seek to make themselves known immediately, while seeking to help us on our way.

It seems unlikely to me, though not at all impossible, that we alone will be able to save the day, given the number of challenges we face, their scale, the speed at which they are progressing, and the potential for spiralling out of control that is being foreshadowed and is beginning to become apparent. All of this is already clear to see when you follow the news.
And in this context, it is our responsibility to strive to achieve this despite everything: it is all that remains within our power. For if we do not succeed, we will not be able to save ourselves from the fate we have created for ourselves, and we will drag the majority of other living beings on Earth down with us.

This parenthesis allows us to offer another angle of view. It may seem pessimistic, but choosing optimism remains the only option that could enable us to overcome all the intertwined problems that threaten our survival on Earth.

I also think that, in the event of any help – whether already present or yet to come – from extraterrestrials or from dimensions that are unknown to most of us, it could not be officially disclosed to us at this time. For precisely with our warlike mentality, we could only feel threatened by the presence of another civilisation, especially since we would be unable to accept their superior level of evolution and would be ready to chase them away, or even exterminate them, claiming that they were there to invade and subjugate us, rather than understanding the solidarity and benevolence of what they would have to transmit, teach or offer us.

I haven't looked into the subject enough to be able to talk about it in more detail, but I am confident that, assuming they do exist, by gradually letting go of our anthropocentric mentality (which is also

based, in a way, on the balance of power), we will eventually acknowledge their existence and their benevolent intentions, and that they will eventually be able to contact us – which may already be the case with people who are ready to welcome them (I am thinking in particular of all the "channelling" types of contact, some of which are done publicly).

If you are interested in this subject, the documentary, in French, "*Une espèce à part*" (*A Species Apart*) by Franck Courchamp and Clément Morin, broadcast by Arte in 2019 (30 min), explores the same themes, as well as others, but in a different way, and without mentioning possible extraterrestrial intervention in the mess we find ourselves in [269]

PART SIX:

INFLUENCING FACTORS OF CHANGE

Note: Much of the following information on influencing factors of change can be found in my article *"Our Influence"* [270] - [see Ref M].

Contrary to popular belief, the influence of individuals on other individuals, groups, communities and societies can be much greater than it appears, and the following chapters will attempt to show how this influence is exerted in many different ways.

1. Two parallel worlds

Despite the utopian or far-fetched appearance of the book you hold in your hands, we may well already be in a fairly advanced stage of evolution, where the crash of trees falling at the edge of the forest masks the mass of those growing silently beyond.

For it is becoming increasingly apparent that we live in two worlds that operate in parallel.
On the one hand, there is a world that operates according to familiar references, those of the past, in complete drift and for which the situation is worsening day by day: the world of money, power, glitz, violence, and all kinds of abuse; where we also find those who want to take advantage of it 'while we still can'. And if it keeps the upper hand (which it still has for now), we won't get very far.

And then there is another world, another culture, new, peaceful, serene, which is being built confidently and quietly but with enormous power that is not yet fully perceptible, because the first steps are often faltering, and attempts are often still too coloured by methods from the old culture, which condemn them in the medium term. But the will is there, and the learning process is in full swing.
An increasingly large part of the population is waking up, and as this awakening does not happen overnight, these worlds are both parallel and intertwined.

Between 10 and 25% of the population, or even more, has already begun and is participating, at least partially, in the transition. This is happening gradually, both on an individual level and at the societal level. The authors of two books on cultural creatives, published 20-25 years ago, described this phenomenon in other terms: Paul H. Ray, Sherry Ruth Anderson, *"The Cultural Creatives - How 50 Million People Are Changing the World"* (2001) [271].

And the more people are involved in this growing transformation, and the more each person's involvement increases, the faster the transition will happen.
And it is true that, at the same time, populism, racism and every man for himself are also gaining ground. But the important thing is to focus on moving in the new direction, without trying at all costs to fight the opposite trends in vain, even if it remains essential to maintain the limits of democracy no matter what.

Nothing can guarantee that we will succeed in making the shift in time.

All the intertwined crises we are currently experiencing are forcing us towards a fundamental shift in general evolution.

This is not something that is purely organised on a large scale; there is no leader, no hierarchy and no pre-established programme. We are moving from a pyramidal system where power and wealth are concentrated at the top to a spider's web where everyone has almost equal power and an essential role, and where the laws are more related to each person's level of consciousness and responsibility. And these two worlds are not totally incompatible. Let us hope that the shift from one to the other can be achieved while limiting the consequences of the disasters that lie ahead.

In this transformation, our individual influence is far from negligible. For, in addition to the known factors that contribute to this evolution, such as education, the mass media, and everything that uses the means of communication through speech and images, there are other means that are probably much more powerful, but which we know little about and do not control, yet which do indeed work, but outside of any organisation, programme or movement.

2. Raising awareness, seeking to influence: it's deluding ourselves

And if I talk about influence in this chapter, it is not so much to give the keys to those who would seek to use it at all costs, but rather to try to inspire some motivation to act individually, simply. Because the answer does not lie in seeking to influence others. Here's why.

When we become aware of the pitfalls of society—money, power, profit—and consequently want to distance ourselves from these abuses, a burning desire to influence those in power—and to get those around us and even more to do the same—often becomes the main objective. Many people then discover their missionary calling, taking small steps forward and trying to push those around them to take big steps. And this often causes the opposite of the desired effect, namely resistance.

I would not go so far as to say that it is vain to share our experience, to argue occasionally (without insisting) with those around us, simply trying to challenge them, without going any further, in order to bring about greater rightness. But it is better to be prepared not to see the effects, at least not quickly. Very often, there is a time lag between what we try to spread around us and the integration of this content by those around us. And it is essential to be aware of this. We can therefore hope that the message – even if it is denied in the present – can still be integrated, and that its memory, in the future, could have an effect during crises, or in the presence of other sources of influence, which, combined, will eventually raise awareness. However, the increasing number of predicted disasters do not give us time to consider changing things by influencing them in the long term. It is a mistake to think that raising awareness among those around us will bring about change.

It is therefore better to learn to think differently while accepting that we may not be able to convince others. The evolution of those around us does not depend on us (unless we have an educational role to play in their lives).

This does not mean that we should keep our opinions to ourselves or withhold information. But we must be aware that their impact may be minimal, or even ineffective, at the moment we express them. And that the more we bombard those around us who are resistant to our words or arguments, the more they will try to deny or avoid them, and therefore avoid us or silence us.

But, in any case, influencing others cannot be an end in itself. It is therefore best to avoid expecting to see the effects of our influence around us.

On the contrary, we have complete control over our own behaviour, beliefs and intentions, and can therefore focus on our own goals of greater consciousness, a stronger sense of responsibility and greater

solidarity, by better managing our impulses and our minds so that they serve the reasons of the heart more fully.
Influence comes as a bonus when we change ourselves. The key is to do our part, to give the best of ourselves, with humility.
And it would be counterproductive to develop our ego and believe ourselves to be indispensable. The earth can turn without us, and humans will continue on their path without us. However, by consciously taking responsibility, we are helping to build the world of tomorrow, perhaps making it better, or at least as good as possible.

If we know that those in power often do not use it wisely, and that those who seek to counterbalance that power have, proportionally, very little impact on the decisions of the former, we still have our part to play, by leaving the game and the rules it implies.

For as long as we seek to exercise countervailing power in the face of dysfunction in so many areas of society, we will continue to delude ourselves and plough the wing rather than achieve concrete results. When we have the opportunity, it is better to leave the rules of a game that we do not approve of, and that we follow more out of inertia than conviction. For to remain in the game is to participate in all these dysfunctions, to be complicit, to maintain what we denounce.
Leaving the game means playing your part as a hummingbird – see "The Story of the Hummingbird" [272] - [see Ref L]. This means stopping being complacent, and also stopping waiting for others to take action, and focusing on our own steps, however small they may be.

And investing ourselves personally in change is anything but useless.

3. Real influence happens far from speeches

If seeking to influence is deluding ourselves, we nevertheless do exert influence, but on a completely different level.

For although it is not easy to convince, we can still bring about a complete different kind of change around us, because psychological force and the radiance or charisma that comes from personal evolution can influence others in another way.

And this influence is by no means negligible, especially as it has a snowball effect, meaning that it follows an upward curve.

At first glance, it is natural to conceive that our individual drop in the ocean of more than 8 billion people on the planet is insignificant. Almost everyone is convinced that only buzz, mass media, large-scale marketing operations, lobbies, certain political powers, and, at best, certain petitions and demonstrations can be the source of large-scale change.
However, individually, we are not powerless at all, but more often than not, we are unaware of how great our influence can be, and generally in a completely unconscious way.

Apart from relatively conscious aspects, such as the power of persuasion, the power of example, the power of testimony, and the power of education and teaching, influence can work in other ways.

For it is much less our words than our actions and thoughts that are at stake.

4. Our role as hummingbirds and its snowball effect

As highlighted above in section 4, the individual role will be the greatest driver of this transition. Citizens will gradually move from feeling powerless in the face of a multitude of problems to playing the humble role of the hummingbird doing its part – see the Story of the Hummingbird already mentioned above [273], with the help of all the alternative initiatives and associations, and the media.

The hour is no longer so much about denouncing abuses, fighting decisions in favour of growth, austerity, etc., as it is about rolling up our sleeves and getting to work to implement on a small scale what we want to see become widespread on a large scale. There is no need to wait for laws to prohibit, discourage or tax certain behaviours in order to stop them. Nor should we expect carrots that encourage or laws that impose other behaviours to be adopted. Reducing our ecological footprint, withdrawing our cards from the capitalist game and raising our own level of personal evolution are choices within our reach.

On a personal level, this can take the form of a slow revolution, because changing our habits, our ways of thinking, our behaviours and our everyday actions cannot happen overnight unless we are forced to do so. It takes years if no acute crisis forces us to do so and if we are walking this path alone. It is the germination in our minds that takes the longest; becoming conscious of the need to move on. And the majority of people have not yet reached this point, but we are very close. Large-scale crises are multiplying and will eventually affect everyone, which will force acceleration. And the connections that are being created between people in the process of evolution are also accelerating the process by contagion and can create a snowball effect. Certain current events can also help us in this regard. And in this sense, these personal revolutions can prove to be much faster than the evolution of laws and decisions in high places.

The consequences of individual changes will not, at first, stop multinationals from seeking profits, with all the consequences that entails, as long as the majority of citizens continue to follow their diktat. However, we are all grappling with this system to one degree or another, with a more or less sharp critical mind, but nevertheless part of this great masquerade.

But the number of people who have fallen off this train is growing, and inevitably, the train will eventually run out of steam.

Before talking about the individual influencing factors that don't involve verbal communication and are less well known, I would first like to mention the known influencing factors, which are the news media and, in parallel, the rest of the media, including social networks. These also include upbringing and the education system. They also include crises that force us to reshuffle the deck and often change the direction of our individual or social choices. I will also focus on the influential power of minorities.

5. The influence of the news media

It is an understatement to consider the news media as the fourth estate. Their influence is phenomenal. However, newsrooms are still too often subject to financial power, either through audience ratings (i.e. advertising rather than listener demand) or to public authorities when they are their source of funding. And it seems that journalists and editors do not fully appreciate the massive influence they have on the public, even if this influence is currently declining, overtaken by the influence of social media and the internet.
When you listen to people talking about current affairs, you can almost tell where they get their information from. People often take the information content of the media they follow at face value, and they are generally extremely loyal to it. This gives journalists, for each media outlet, extremely important power. This is all the more true when we consider the effect of mirror neurons (discussed later in the text).

When a media outlet chooses to ignore ratings and the influence of lobbies, and takes the trouble to convey and interpret information without allowing its content to be dictated by political power or economic interests, it is truly fulfilling its role, and this does not necessarily alienate the public. This transformation is already underway.

We can already see it happening, as the presence of many other sources of news on the internet helps the news media to relay it. Whereas in the past certain information was simply denied or ignored, some information is now simply reported and sometimes takes on unexpected proportions, as we are currently seeing with regard to sexual predators and, to a lesser extent, political and industrial scandals.

And although they are currently still exercising it too little, the news media potentially have immense power in their hands to help accelerate the current process of change, if they agree to play this essential role as a catalyst, if they choose to facilitate citizens' access to information that gives them the ability to take part in new alternatives.
This is an editorial choice that some media outlets are beginning to make, at least in part,
And this choice may lead other media outlets to follow suit.

Because in the current context, even more so than in the past, it is the duty of the media to circulate information about all abuses, about the statistics and scientific knowledge related to them, about the responsibility of those who are behind them, about the actions of NGOs, institutions and activists who are trying to take new, healthier approaches, about the existence or absence of legislation on these subjects, and about the actions or inaction of public authorities in these areas. But it is even more essential to highlight all the alternatives that are being developed, not only to make them visible, but above all to enable everyone to start participating in them.

6. The role of crises

A crisis consists of a crossroads where we are forced to get off the train and are led to reconsider our direction. If we stubbornly stick to the same course by getting back on the same train, other crises will arise.

And it is in this sense that we must consider the accumulation of crises that are currently manifested in all areas of society (environmental, economic, financial, political, social, health, spiritual). Resisting changes embeds us in crises.

And to shift our perspective, to shake our certainties, the shift is usually gradual. As with almost everything, the first step in changing course is the most difficult. It's like the first turn of the screw when it comes to loosening it. It takes 100 times more force than the last turn of the screw. And, in the same way, the more you turn the screw, the easier it is to generate movement.
Our initial certainties are the hardest to unbolt. And from this perspective, the most significant brakes are the culture of profit, scientific culture, the culture of male domination, the culture of the balance of power, and all of this is closely linked to Western culture.
In this context, being European or North American, male, an academic, a scientist, an athlete, or having a strong socio-cultural education (strict upbringing, significant influence from television, social media, literature or cinema) represents a serious hindrance to changing one's mentality.
For the greater the cultural influence in all these areas, the harder the initial unbolting movement will be. This is the reason why only crises are capable of achieving sufficient force to shake up our habits of thought.

For crises – whether individual or collective – have the power to make us evolve more quickly. Only they are generally capable of forcing this initial turn of the screw. And until mentalities have evolved enough to force a 180° turn, or rather to change our perspective and paradigm and free us from the baggage that prevents us from breaking through the wall, more serious crises will arise – whether caused directly or indirectly by human action (wars, poverty, stock market crashes and national bankruptcies), or whether they are disasters, famines, shortages or pandemics. These crises are likely to affect more and more people.

As individuals, we may not feel concerned if we are not yet directly affected. It is true that, with regard to extreme phenomena directly linked to climate, for example, until recently, the majority of people in Western countries were still unaffected. Hurricanes and typhoons, floods, landslides, droughts and forest fires remained relatively localised. However, the consequences of global warming predicted by scientists for the 2030s, 2040s and even 2050s are already being felt. And all the other problems of environmental degradation (biodiversity, resources, pollution) that are not yet taken very seriously, because the consequences are still seemingly distant (in space and time), will affect us much sooner than we imagine. Even without taking environmental phenomena into account, and even in the richest countries, a significant proportion of the population is directly affected by poverty, diseases of civilisation, psychological distress triggered by all our social excesses, and, since 2022, the consequences of war. We are increasingly at risk of being affected by extreme phenomena, but also by the resulting shortages, and even by the arrival of epidemics or the outbreak of violence linked to the collapse of the system that is looming. Anyone who follows the news can see that crises are accelerating and increasing in scale.

The accumulation of crises will make the need to evolve not only increasingly tangible, but unavoidable for those directly affected.

But in addition to collective crises, there are also individual crises, which are also insidiously becoming more numerous and often accumulate. A large number of people 'fall from the train' because they experience a break in their lives and have to recover from it, whether it be unemployment, burnout, illness, mourning, divorce, failure, accident, rape, harassment, assault, addiction, and many others, or even a combination of several of these events. Anyone who is affected in this way finds themselves in pain and, as a result, can no longer continue 'as before'. The superficiality of our society and the lack of solidarity in cities mean that many will find it difficult to bounce back and will have to face a lack of meaning. And this is what will push them – some of them, at least – to wake up, to shift their perspective, which will lead them to watch the majority who are not yet affected drift further away, continuing to rush headlong ahead.

Because when we "fall off the train", a process of transformation is initiated, despite ourselves in the end. We can no longer carry on as before. The hypnosis that materialistic society had imposed on us no longer works, and those affected by these crises are gradually, inevitably, returning to natural values. And these values are indeed those advocated by religions.

By hitting rock bottom, they become capable of turning the coin over, of extracting the best from the worst, of realising that we all have two sides to us, and that we all contain fear and empathy, hatred and compassion. And that at some point, rather than letting ourselves be carried away by events, withdrawing into ourselves, or reacting in kind, we must choose something else and reconnect with the best of who we are.
This is not naive romanticism nor religiosity. It starts from experience. It is a path that we walk alone and that starts with ourselves. The most explicit testimonies in these areas concern certain people who have experienced terrorist attacks in recent years or who have lost a loved one in them, and who have been able to recover.

It is from these people that the best solutions will come. Because once we enter into modes of functioning linked to empathy, altruism, compassion, etc., we leave behind the terrain of rivalry, manipulation, revenge, blackmail, lies and other abuses linked to the balance of power.

To illustrate the effect of a crisis at a collective level, I think the Covid-19 pandemic is a perfect example. It is clear that the shock to the global economy has not been enough to really change the situation. But it is also clear that part of the population has experienced a shift in mentality, and the crises that will follow will accentuate this work, even if we have all been quick to forget this episode as soon as possible. In the paragraphs below, I list the effects that the arrival of the pandemic, lockdowns and other consequences have had on political and economic decisions, as well as on the population.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic was an exceptional but entirely temporary catalyst for raising awareness among the population. Despite the apparent temporary nature of its effects, it far surpasses all other usual factors of evolution and progress, as it has affected absolutely everyone, at roughly the same time, including, despite everything, a great many people in a very profound and lasting way: people who were seriously or permanently affected, healthcare workers, people who were vulnerable to the disease or due to their living conditions, those close to people who were seriously ill or had died, and people whose life plans were disrupted by lockdowns and closures of all kinds. This represents hundreds of millions of people.

In the early months, despite considerable confusion among policymakers, it was as if, day after day, the virus was showing us the way forward, both individually and collectively.
And the most striking positive aspect, alongside the catastrophe of millions of deaths caused by the pandemic, is that many of the decisions taken were perfectly in line with those needed to flatten the curve of global warming, which is also potentially exponential.

Here are some of these effects, without being exhaustive:

*** An unexpected turnaround in the attitude of political representatives**

The most remarkable effect is that of lightning-fast political decisions. Decisions that had been refused for decades on the pretext that they were impossible or would take time to implement were taken in a matter of hours or days. And implementation has been just as rapid.

Bruno Latour, in the article (in French): « Imaginer les gestes-barrières contre le retour à la production d'avant-crise » (*Imagining barrier gestures against a return to pre-crisis production)* (2020), on *SeenThis*, says this:

"The first lesson of the coronavirus is also the most astonishing: it has indeed been proven that it is possible, in a matter of weeks, to suspend everywhere in the world and at the same time, an economic system that we had been told until now was impossible to slow down or redirect.

...

there was indeed, in the global economic system, hidden from everyone, a bright red alarm signal with a large, sturdy steel handle that heads of state could pull each in turn to stop the 'train of progress' with a loud screech of brakes." [274]

*** Budgets are being found to meet needs**

Budgets are being released left, right and centre to enable furlough schemes, to save certain businesses, such as in the hospitality industry, to keep certain companies that have been forced to shut down afloat, to help the most disadvantaged and homeless, and, of course, to enable hospital services to cope with the pandemic. And this amounts to trillions of dollars or euros! We are borrowing at negative interest rates, relatively aware that we may never actually repay all these exorbitant amounts.

*** The administrative bubble is deflating**

While seeking to protect privacy, a large number of administrative barriers and health protocols are being relaxed. Medical consultations can be conducted via screens, and medical prescriptions are no longer required to obtain certain essential care. Many administrative procedures can now be carried out via the internet or by telephone (such as help with filling in tax forms, for example).

*** Discussions about relocation are emerging**

*** There is also talks about renationalisation**

*** Hundreds of companies have changed their production methods** to offer what was necessary, and even urgent, and these transformations have been achieved in a matter of days.

*** The debt of the poorest countries is being called into question**

*** Political representatives are more united**

With each wave, political quarrels are temporarily swept aside so that everyone can sit down together and work towards a common goal. Political affiliations and nationalism are put on hold so that they can strike hard and decide with one voice, which reassures citizens.

*** We've gone back to basics**

At the height of the first wave, Italy, followed by Spain a few days later, was the first to decide to halt the production of everything that was not directly useful. In a way, the coronavirus has clearly forced us to focus on the activities that should be the sole focus of the real economy, with the rest being almost explicitly declared superfluous. Of course, we can broaden the scope a little and move from the essential to the useful, but the coronavirus has clearly shown us where to go to find what really matters.

*** A basic income is being considered much more seriously**

It is being studied in Germany, Spain has decided to introduce it, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has called for it to be granted temporarily to the 2.7 billion people considered poor worldwide (see the chapter on this subject).

*** We have even managed to agree to pause wars** [275]

This touches on a crucial point of realisations. For on a collective level, war is a sign of our most primitive attitudes, when we are prepared to kill rather than talk. Achieving a situation where we decide, on a global level, to call a truce in all ongoing wars is a truly extraordinary phenomenon.

And these are only some of the changes that have taken place at the collective level, because major changes have also occurred at the individual level. These changes did not last over time. But part of the population only partially resumed its old habits. And while we may regret that all this did not last, it is simply only a postponement until the next crises, which will not spare us. But above all, it has now been proven that all this can happen, that it is a question of will, and that those in charge who tell us in the future that "it is impossible" or "it will take time" are not competent to carry out their mandate.

Furthermore, the impact of the pandemic crisis on the population is combined with all the other types of influences described in the following chapters, contributing to a general acceleration in the evolution of consciousness.

7. Upbringing and teaching – including the role played by the internet

Anyone who has made a substantial shift in their behaviour, way of thinking or emotional management, and who becomes a parent or has an educational role with children or young people, will automatically pass on all of this to them, without actually having to teach them anything. Once the mental attitude evolves, it is reflected in behaviour, communication and everything else that can be seen externally from our inner workings. This will influence and leave its mark on those around us.

Therefore, the more parents, grandparents and teaching staff evolve, the more this can be reflected in education. And the reverse phenomenon should not be overlooked either. An increasing number of teenagers and young people feel much more concerned about current issues and the responses that are offered to them – or not. This is because it concerns their future. They know that they will not enjoy the same advantages and comforts that previous generations have enjoyed, and that they may even be much more severely affected. And, like Greta Thunberg, they will shake up their parents and push them out of their comfort zone.

On the other hand, until recently, parental and school education were the pillars of education and were reinforced by reading, certain experiences and social contacts. However, the transmission of knowledge and information is undergoing a significant shift. Through the internet, we now have increasingly free access to exponentially more diverse and numerous content. What's more, it is up to each individual to draw on this wealth of knowledge according to their needs, desires, passions, interests... or addictions, influences...

And as part of these subjects, we now have access among others to sources of information that until recently were considered alternative, marginal or uninteresting. These subjects are beginning to be taken seriously and are even becoming increasingly important. They include scientific, psychological, ecological, nutritional, economic, sociological and philosophical topics.
This allows everyone to familiarise themselves with new concepts, which can help them to accept them and ultimately to succeed in acting and behaving in accordance with these new benchmarks.

I do not wish to deny the harmful influence of the internet, with all its fake news, conspiracy theories, low-level influencers, scams, personalised advertising and so on, which have a massive impact on a significant proportion of the population. I dare to hope that, in the face of the deafening noise of the 'trees of disinformation' that lead to chaos, the millions of 'trees of information' that are quietly growing on the internet will, over time, through their reliability, succeed to restore a little more rightness to the whole and bring back calm. For I dare to believe that it is difficult to maintain untruths over time, because the evidence of lies almost always ends up coming to light.

That said, the internet can provide an extremely important educational supplement for all ages, the scope of which we do not yet fully appreciate, particularly in the area of the evolution of consciousness. And it is likely that this aspect will accelerate the paradigm shift that we are called upon to achieve.

Before describing less academic means of influence, I will address one last topic: the power of minorities, because this is also significant. It is closely linked to the power of non-violent movements.

8. The power of the minority

> *"A minority can change the opinions and norms of a majority, regardless of their power or relative status, as long as, all other things being equal, the organisation of its actions, as well as the expression of its opinions and objectives, comply with the conditions ... of autonomy, investment or equity. Serge Moscovici in the book (in French) "La psychologie des minorités actives", (1991) p.171, available in full online [276]. This book has been translated in English under the title: "Social Influence and Social Change").*

The power of the minority of the population that is evolving should not be underestimated. And it is closely linked to the power of non-violent movements. Because while some of them show rebellious, demanding, even violent attitudes, most act in a less ostentatious manner, and certain events allow their actions to become visible to everyone.

Greta Thurnberg is a fairly representative example of how to exert influence when you are in the minority. Alone, as a teenager, a woman, small in stature and rather marginal in her profile, she went to demonstrate alone in front of the Swedish parliament, striking from school every Friday.
Within a year, she managed to mobilise millions of people around the world to follow her lead, and not just schoolchildren and students, far from it. She even awakened certain eminent scientists who did not dare to assert themselves for fear of lacking objectivity. Although for most of its supporters, this movement is limited to protests and speeches, it has the merit of existing and, above all, of provoking debate.

And the minority that is changing the paradigm is growing and will prove increasingly influential, depending on how those who support it act concretely.

The influence of minorities can depend on a number of factors, including:

- the strong conviction and the confidence we show in relation to the opinion, the cause or the project that is important to us.
The more convinced we are of the validity of what we are doing, the more confidently we act, and the greater the impact on those who witness it.

- Consistency between what we believe and the behaviours that correspond to those beliefs.
If the approach is honest and not limited to intellectual argumentation, but is marked by actions and the way in which they are carried out, this makes them significantly more credible.

- Perseverance, motivation and determination demonstrated in the approach.
When one persists over time in one's intentions and in the manifestation of certain behaviours, this demonstrates in a certain way that the experience is consistent with what one claims to believe;

- and this in parallel with the importance we attach to this approach, independently of any authority or dogma.
The fact that convictions are very important to those who defend them, and that they are not dictated by anything external, meaning that one does not simply follow the influence of others, inevitably interpellates those who witness it.

- The rightness of actions and words, corresponding to high values.
When behaviour is aligned with values such as honesty, fairness, justice, respect, durability, etc., it is not only difficult to oppose, but also has a contagious effect.

- Knowledge, understanding, competence and consciousness that one shows in relation with the approach.
It is difficult to undermine an opinion or reasoning when it is well-supported and well-founded.

- The willingness to assume one's responsibilities.
Those who recognise their mistakes, try to remedy them, try to learn how to avoid them and act with integrity; demonstrate a form of integrity, humility and a desire to move forward in a constructive manner and with respect for the community.

- Uncompromising in the interpretation of what one does and the message one conveys, to the point of a certain radicalism.
In the sense that it is difficult to divert a person from their goals when they know that they are well-founded and can no longer conceive of returning to their old beliefs;

- and this, coupled with empathy and a relative indulgence and openness towards those who do not do as one does.
This is what makes dialogue possible and opinions flexible, without being influenced by the social pressure represented by the majority. It is much easier to interact with and be influenced by people who follow their hearts.

- And finally, the fact that, in some cases, this approach, on a material level, goes against the personal interests of those who adopt it (even if personal interests on a broader level converge with the general interest sought).
In the sense that refusing to consume, to indulge, to enrich oneself, is the opposite of a selfish attitude or one that seeks to draw attention to oneself. Defending a cause that, a priori, is that of the community, but not entirely one's own, makes the cause de facto more just;

- and that one is making a request rather than a demand.
This allows us to avoid direct opposition – *"what you resist persists"* – and is in line with acting from the heart.

It is all these frames of mind that give a minority group greater power to influence.

What is also striking is the ability to go against the tide without being influenced by pressure from the majority, which can sometimes be violent, because everyone believes in what they are doing. It is not a desire to stand out from the majority, but rather a conviction so strong that it leads to standing out. And the power that this generates is also induced because there is no desire to exercise power or coercion.

I am talking here about two very different kinds of power. On the one hand, there is the power of influence (constructive in this case, as the opposite tendency also exists, through manipulation, among other things), and on the other hand, there is the power of force (whether physical or psychological), which creates resistance and therefore hinders influence.

The power of influence that a minority can exert is therefore a power of a different order.
Serge Moscovici explains all this in his book (already mentioned) on *"The Psychology of Active Minorities"* (1991), and in particular in Chapter 6 on behavioural styles:
The book is available, in French, in its entirety on the internet, [277] and has been translated in English under the title: "Social Influence and Social Change").

9. Catalysts of a different kind

Crises are the primary drivers of evolution. They have the power to transform us. Other influences include education, information, argumentation, the power of example, testimonials, and minority movements. However, all of this is only the visible part: the part that is known, but certainly not the most important. It represents more a toolbox for those who are already engaged in the process.

However, when we do our part, we de facto encourage others to do the same, because a whole series of other lesser-known, imperceptible sources of influence will exert their effect in the same direction.
To my knowledge, there are at least six: collective intelligence, mirror neurons, epigenetics, the contagion of altruism, morphogenetic fields, the transmission of all our thoughts and emotions, and indirectly, self-contagion. These less visible factors of influence act as catalysts. There are probably others. These catalysts combine, influence each other, and are in fact part of the same process. We are part of a whole, and it is the whole that is on a path of evolution.
When we look at things this way, we understand that evolution is inevitable and is indeed at our doorstep and within our reach. And by deciding to take this path at our own individual level and by getting involved, we not only stop hindering this evolution, but above all, we simply do our part and help to accelerate it.

Here are some of these influencing factors. The first and last are not individual, but are part of these alternative and lesser-known catalysts.

a - Collective intelligence

Collective intelligence is one of the solutions that comes from the heart. It manifests itself outside of the balance of power, far from environments where competition reigns supreme and social systems based on coercion and pride. It manifests itself when each individual in a group focuses their intentions on one or more common causes, towards the same goal, with the main motivation being the success of the project, and being able to put aside their personal interests. This can only happen when the whole becomes more important than the self within the framework of the project. Because when everyone is united in their will to move in the same direction, it is easier to avoid disputes and things fall into place naturally.
Priorities are then fundamentally transformed, allowing to access creativity, intelligence, efficiency and persuasiveness that far exceed the sum of those of each individual involved. The group then functions like a school of fish, a flock of thousands of birds, or a team of champions. Such projects spread much more quickly than others, without necessarily creating a buzz or receiving media publicity.

Projects that operate with collective intelligence are therefore much more likely to succeed than any others. Thus, the more they are used (and their operation is becoming increasingly well known and sought after), the more opportunities there will be to move towards solutions and evolution, where creativity will

take precedence over the reproduction of what has always been done, without turning our backs on tradition. See my article (in French) *"Collective Intelligence"* [278] - [see Ref E].

This topic is partly related to that of thought transmission, which will be discussed later.

Lynne McTaggart, in a May 2021 article *entitled "The Thoughtful Megaphone"* [279] - [see Ref 25bis], describes this phenomenon from another, more scientific perspective: that of transmission, synchronisation, resonance and the power of intention. This concerns both objects and living beings.

On a human level, according to several surprising studies cited in the article, we observe the merging of brains and the synchronisation of bodily rhythms (heartbeat, breathing) when people cooperate in a significant way; for example, during group musical improvisation, the sending of intention between partners in a couple, or the joint work of jugglers.
Lynne McTaggart also mentions the healing power that can be used in these circumstances (she teaches this to groups in her *"power of 8"* training courses). She explains that certain conditions and mental states make this fusion even more powerful, as well as the intentions of the people involved, particularly when those intentions are altruistic, to the point where they can influence events on a global scale. She is constantly gathering scientific information on the subject and conducting large-scale experiments with her readers and training participants (from all over the world), accompanied by researchers, in order to deepen our understanding of these collective processes.

At the individual level, it is therefore essential to direct our actions towards groups where collective intelligence can function.

b - Mirror neurons

Mirror neurons were discovered in 1996 in Italy by Giacomo Rizzolatti, a neurologist at the University of Parma. This was a major discovery, yet it did not receive much media attention. While our learning is based on our experience, it is also, naturally and automatically, based on imitating what we see, hear and perceive.

When we observe someone making a movement, motor neurons are also activated in our brain, even though our body is not participating in the action. In this way, when our intention (conscious or unconscious) is to imitate the observed gesture, we are already learning, just by observing it, even if we are not aware of it.

The contagiousness of imitation is already visible in everyday behaviours such as yawning or laughing, which are easily imitated by those around us. Understanding this effect and being aware of its consequences forces us to learn to act more responsibly in all circumstances. A good example of this is the role of pedestrians at crossroads. When a pedestrian crosses the street while the light is red for them, if they are not alone, there is a good chance that other pedestrians will follow them, imitating them – without checking the light or whether any cars are coming – simply because of the mirror effect.
If the pedestrian who crosses first when the light is red is aware that a car is approaching 50 metres away and quickens their pace to avoid it, the same will not be true for those who have followed them automatically.
Therefore, as pedestrians, if we are aware of this possible automatic process in other pedestrians, we know the responsibility we bear when crossing first at a red light. This will automatically lead us to re-evaluate our attitude and check first whether we are being followed or not, or even lead us to get into the habit of respecting red lights for pedestrians in all circumstances.

I give this example because it illustrates quite well the responsibility we have for all our actions and behaviours, even the most trivial ones, when witnessed by others, and consequently the learning process involved in choosing whether or not to perform certain actions, or how to perform them, depending on their consequences for those who witness them.

The role of parental education works in the same way, of course. In addition to their active role, all of a parent's actions are subject to imitation by their children.

Therefore, when we adopt new behaviours that challenge those around us, we risk influencing them in the long term, without having to preach or argue. Because if we try to convince them to follow us and they are initially reluctant, we are much more likely to encounter resistance on their part.
Our responsibility for our personal behaviour is therefore much greater than the path we take individually. It can also influence the path that others take.

Thus, any learning of new methods or behaviours by certain members of a community is likely to be imitated by other members of the community at some point. The responsibility of choosing the right behaviours is therefore much greater than we previously imagined.

In this sense, we can better understand the importance of the fourth estate, represented by the mass media. Programming shows, series and reality TV based on violence, sexism, injustice, competition and manipulation inherently educates viewers to adopt these behaviours.
The same applies to other media such as cinema, YouTubers or influencers and their millions of followers, social networks, etc., and the massive invasion of advertising at all levels.
The content of our news, teaching methods in schools, etc., are all subject to imitation by those who receive them.

Another aspect to consider with mirror neurons is their ineffectiveness when it comes to anything we dislike. This prevents imitation.
In principle, this could protect us from the danger of imitating everything that is harmful in our environment. Except that we must also take habituation into account. For example, the more we live in a violent environment, the more we become accustomed to it and the more we accept it. And this can happen very gradually, without us noticing, as in *"The boiled frog"* [280] - [see Ref B].
It is therefore not surprising that in a society where we are inundated with advertising that pushes us to consume, where television and cinema show us all the worst aspects of human behaviour and all the horror of current events, we end up simply taking on the role of sheep, of consumers, and behaving in an increasingly violent, selfishly, dishonestly, learning to mistrust everything, and ending up supporting the most fascist policies, while trying to build up a capital of shares, clinging to doing what we want at all costs without caring about those around us who are suffering. I am, of course, forcing the line. No one is quite like this caricature. Yet we have all adopted one or other aspect of it in a marked way, or sometimes in a more subtle and insidious way.

A thorough questioning of the choice of broadcasts and other written, televised, cinematographic or online contents will therefore have a serious impact on those who immerse themselves in them.

Becoming aware of this aspect of imitation through mirror neurons can motivate us to seek out other images and information, but also to behave differently and to seek out people who have taken the same path.

You can learn more about on mirror neurons, in the article proposed by Wikipedia [281]

Note regarding empathy:

I would like to make an important distinction between a form of sensitivity that allows us, through mirror neurons, to experience the same emotion as the person in front of us, but in an involuntary way, and without necessarily giving us the ability to help and support them. People with this sensitivity or ability are sometimes called "emotional sponges". And this, in my opinion, is not real empathy. Because in this case, by understanding the emotion we are facing and immersing ourselves in it, we are not able to help the other person manage or overcome it. But this is often confused with empathy, because there is indeed an understanding of the other person's emotion.

Real empathy consists – through experience and self-knowledge, or through some form of education or training – in recognising the emotion of the person in front of us, understanding it, but being able to protect ourselves from entering into it ourselves, precisely so that we can help them and offer ourselves as a pillar of support. This is virtually impossible when we become emotionally involved and absorb the other person's emotions like a sponge. For in this case, the person may indeed feel understood, but their emotions may be reinforced by the mirror effect or knock-on effect, without having a pillar to lean on. When faced with someone who absorbs our emotions, it is much more difficult to step back from the emotion and mentally reconnect with a calmer reality.
The altruism present in true empathy is much stronger and more conscious.
Many people confuse these two types of reactions and believe themselves to be empathetic, when in fact they are hypersensitive and react like a sponge.
The two reactions cannot occur simultaneously, unless the sensitivity is mild and controlled.

Real empathy is generally learned through experience and resilience, when we manage to deal with our own wounds, and therefore, more often than not, with age.

c - Epigenetics

I cannot claim to know this subject, and this paragraph was actually added after the rest of the document was written, as it was inspired by the book (already mentioned) *"The Spirit Level - Why Equality is Better for Everyone"* (2010), Penguin Publisher by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2019) [282], as well as what Joe Dispenza says about it in his books, lectures and training courses. In a few words, here is what I have understood about this subject. While we are born with a specific DNA, which composes our genes and cannot be modified during our lifetime, our genes can be modified by our experiences. They can be activated or deactivated. And their state, which depends on our experiences, can be passed on unchanged for several generations.
Consequently, when we learn new ways of functioning in life before becoming parents, this can lead to the activation or deactivation of certain genes. Our evolution will thus benefit our future children without them having to do all the work of transformation that we had to do.
Conversely, epigenetics can reinforce social inequalities, because while poverty only generates survival behaviours, it can also create a vicious circle. For, being educated in a disadvantaged environment creates conditionings for survival behaviours in children, and beyond that, it can also be passed on to subsequent generations through heredity.

From then on, changes in the behaviour and mental and emotional functioning of potential parents can ensure that this evolution is maintained over time for future generations.

d - The contagion of altruism

The contagion of altruism could be the result of mirror neurons. However, this contagion has an even greater force, because when we witness an act of altruism, we are imbued with a positive emotion, a feeling that gives meaning. And this impression generates the desire to do the same. This does not

necessarily mean that the behaviour will be imitated, but the act of altruism observed is, in a way, the trigger for a chain of altruistic acts that will then be performed by the observer. The following article (in French) by Ilios Kotsou (2018) calls this *"L'élévation"* [283].
Another article (also in French) *"La gentillesse serait-elle contagieuse ?"* cites several studies that have been conducted on this subject [284].

This contagion is also reflexive: being generous, kind and giving of ourselves makes us feel good and encourages us to continue in this vein. The more we experience it, the easier it becomes to leave behind the more selfish aspects of individualism, which consist of persevering in doing whatever we want without taking others into account, etc.
Altruism, if it is not feigned, if it is initiated by genuine kindliness and empathy, can have a significant counterbalancing effect on habits, conditionings, impulses and addictions. It is also the light that can help us dissolve our shadow side. For our kindliness towards ourselves, by accepting our darker sides, opens us up to accepting the other in the same way, and allows us to learn to give without counting.

All behaviours that involve stepping outside the economic system as we currently know it can be imbued with altruistic intentions, a thirst for justice and a desire for solidarity. In this sense, not only can they automatically generate imitation, but they will also likely stimulate those who witness them to go even further. In a way, solidarity and all humanistic behaviours are drivers of a positive, constructive, creative spiral towards more behaviours of this kind. It is easy to imagine that the more citizens practise them, and therefore the more citizens witness them, the more easily these behaviours will eventually become widespread.

e - Morphic (or morphogenetic) fields

Even further, there is another level of automatic and unconscious collective learning process.

Rupert Sheldrake, a British biologist, has put forward a whole theory on this subject, which I have attempted to describe in the article: *"From the hundredth monkey to the morphic fields – from the legend to the scientific hypothesis"* [285] - [see Ref N]. His theory is based on the observation in biology that when a community learns something, and once that learning has been acquired by a sufficient number of members of that community, it is automatically acquired by all members of that community, but also by all members of communities of the same species, even in the absence of any material communication between these communities. And this applies equally to human beings.
While we tend to think that our memory is located in our brain, that our genes are responsible for hereditary traits, and that our thoughts are solely the result of chemical and electrical phenomena occurring in the brain, Sheldrake posits that this is not the case.
The modifications we make in our lives on an individual level would thus have an impact on those around us, and even further afield, even if we do not show or communicate them.

This theory allows us to envisage the acceleration of future transitions. The larger the groups involved, the faster the transformations will occur and on a larger scale. This would allow us to consider that, faced with the increasingly visible collapse of our civilisation, the rebirth of a new civilisation, that of a paradigm shift, is already underway. Whenever a critical mass is reached for a progress to be implemented, i.e. when a sufficiently large number of people become capable of integrating it into their personal lives, then progress can become widespread.

f - The transmission of all our thoughts and emotions

"Everything that we are thinking and feeling is being broadcasted" Anna Breytenbach

"Human consciousness seems to be like a leaky bucket, with our thoughts spilling out of us, getting embedded in everything from other people to our food." Lynne McTaggart

In addition to the other influencing factors mentioned above, there is our ability to transmit our thoughts and emotions outside the channels of verbal and written language, which may overlap in part with that of morphogenetic fields. This happens on an unconscious level, both on the part of the transmitters and the receivers that we are.

To better understand the concept, I suggest you watch the following video (14'36") of an interview with Anna Breytenbach, *"Anna Breytenbach communicates with Great White Shark"* (2015), who talks about sharks and their reason for attacking humans (which actually happens very rarely) [286] - [see Ref 8].

Although the subject raised seems quite distant from the topic discussed here, she explains very clearly how far everything we think and feel is broadcasted to those around us or to the beings affected by these thoughts and emotions. Contrary to popular belief, our thoughts and emotions do not only influence ourselves, and this in all circumstances and in all matters. Understanding this implies that it is not so much our actions that affect reality, but rather what we think and feel about them. Choosing the direction of our thoughts (and in particular our intentions) and our feelings will influence reality in this sense.

If you listen carefully to the entire video, it gives a completely different perspective to everything said about the balance of power earlier in the text. Everything we think, feel and do in the context of the balance of power and/or fear affects our environment. Everything we think, feel and do in the context of empathy, love, compassion, appreciation, altruism, generosity, rightness, consistency, mutual aid, integrity, respect, solidarity, etc. also affects our environment.
And the line between the two types of thoughts and feelings is not always clear. It is therefore essential to understand what the balance of power is, the intentions it implies, and how we use it – our shadow side – before we become able to make the right choices, one by one, for all our actions and thoughts, on a daily basis.
In a way, it is better to put your own house in order before looking into other people's affairs.

We can try as hard as we like to act respectfully, non-violently and kindly, but if our thoughts do not correspond to our actions, even if only partially, the effects of our actions our actions will not bring the results we would like to get.

And to illustrate this difficult-to-perceive nuance between thoughts and actions that belong to the realm of the balance of power or, conversely, to the realm of altruism, I will use the example of our purchases. Apart from the fact that consumption loses all meaning when we seek to leave the world of material wealth behind, the choices we make when shopping will also be implicated.
To put a stop to abusive, discriminatory, or unfair policies practised in a country or by a multinational corporation, we can choose to boycott the products manufactured there. The list of products we can boycott is long if we are somewhat aware of political and commercial practices around the world.
The boycott attitude consists of directly confronting the authority that ensures the production of these products. And the demand to abandon the policy or commercial practice in question consists of a requirement, with the force of trying to influence the profits that we want to prevent by refraining from buying them. The intention that generally underlies a boycott is a spirit of revenge.

The balance of power is, in most cases, very uneven, as the number of people participating in the boycott is usually so small that it is far from being able to influence the policy or practice in question.

Conversely, when we make choices that are no longer based on the balance of power, there is a good chance that we will not buy products that are the result of abusive, discriminatory or unfair policies or practices. But the intention behind our purchases will no longer be in opposition to the authorities responsible for them. The intention will first and foremost be to stop buying anything and everything, which will drastically reduce our consumption, and to leave commercial channels based solely on profit by buying from places that offer ethical, ecological, local, bulk products, etc. There is therefore no spirit of revenge in this attitude.

However, it is the intention behind the act and the thought that will make all the difference in terms of the impact of the behaviour, which in both cases will probably be almost the same, except that boycotting is a very limited action, while alternative consumption has a much broader reach. And the intention that guides the act is driven, depending on the case, by the balance of power or by altruism.
Living very modestly, repairing, recycling, etc., and buying alternative products de facto entails no longer buying big brands, but without seeking to make any kind of protest against them. This is the opposite of a boycott.

The boycott, compared to this attitude, seem derisory. When our purchases are oriented towards alternatives, they are not guided by opposition to large companies, trying to force them to change their ways. The approach is simply to abandon consumption as a whole in order to respect oneself (eating healthily, for example) and to respect others and the planet.

However, boycotting and alternative purchasing behaviours are in fact very similar. It is the underlying approach that is very different. But if our thoughts, emotions, and therefore intentions, are transmitted beyond ourselves, the impact will be diametrically opposed for similar actions, depending on the intentions behind them.

Another example I have already mentioned is that of demonstrations and other militant actions. As long as we campaign and demonstrate basing our demands on requirements, we remain at a counterproductive level, because we are making ourselves heard in a context of opposition and balance of power. If, on the other hand, we demonstrate in the context of a request, of support for a fairer policy, and in the context of aligning our intentions with those of all the other demonstrators and in line with our behaviour as citizens and private individuals in general, we then create a completely different context that is likely to have a much greater impact. And when we are in this mode, it is very likely that we will not be content with just demonstrating, but will also take action on many other levels, based on the same intention, through meditation and work on ourselves, sobriety, participation in alternative citizen actions, etc.

Acting on an individual level is therefore not as insignificant and useless as it may seem.

When we understand the impact of the thoughts and emotions we spread, simply by letting them cross our minds, we can understand that turning the tongue seven times in the mouth before speaking is only the first step. We must also turn seven times our neurons and seven times our hormones in our brain and in our body to learn how to dissolve thoughts laden with poison, the rushes of negative emotions, both of which can be as harmful to the other as to ourselves.
It is not a question of denying them when they arise, but of facing them, accepting them, calming them, and generating new, more positive ones.

This will not only change our perspective on the problems we encounter, leading to a change in behaviour and choices in our decisions, but it will also change the response of those we deal with, who may then no

longer be the source of the problems but may even become collaborators in the implementation of entirely new solutions.

g - Self-contagion

The following can also be linked to morphogenetic fields, in the sense that Rupert Sheldrake talks about morphic self-resonance when learning or change brought about in an individual, operates an influence on that individual themselves to anchor these changes (habits) or favour future changes.
There is a form of self-stimulation in the process of evolving towards change. Once our mind is awakened to all the subjects that allow us to deepen or advance with respect to our current interests, we will encounter suggestions for reading, conferences, or even training courses, videos or documentaries, interviews, practices, or also experiences and encounters that will lead us move forward on this path. This can happen of course because we subscribe to mailing lists or join associations, but it is also because we will automatically be drawn, in any circumstances, to notice things related to the subjects we are exploring. And we will be more easily led to have experiences that encourage us to continue on this path.

Self-contagion can also be understood from another perspective, which is perfectly illustrated by the following tale of black birds and white birds:

White Birds and Black Birds

In relation to one another, humans are comparable to walls located facing one another. Each wall is pierced by a multitude of small holes where white birds and black birds are nested.

The black birds are bad thoughts and bad words.

The white birds are good thoughts and good words.

Because of their form, the white birds can only enter into holes for white birds and the same for black birds who can only nest in holes for black birds.

Now, imagine two men who believe they are enemies of each other. Let us call them Yousef and Ali. ... One day, Yousef, persuaded that Ali wishes bad for him, feels full of anger for Ali and sends him a very bad thought. In doing this, Yousef releases a black bird and at the same time liberates a corresponding hole. His black bird flies towards Ali and looks for an empty hole adapted to his form to nest in.

If, from his side, Ali has not sent a black bird towards Yousef, that is, if Ali has not emitted any bad thought, none of his black holes will be empty. Finding no place to lodge itself, Yousef's black bird will be obliged to return to its original nest, taking with him the evil which he was burdened with, an evil which will end up eroding and destroying Yousef himself.

But let us imagine that Ali too has emitted a bad thought. By doing this, he has liberated a hole in which Yousef's black bird will be able to enter in order to deposit part of his evil and accomplish there his mission of destruction. During this time, Ali's black bird will fly towards Yousef and will alight in the hole freed up by Ali's black bird.

Thus, the two black birds will have obtained their goal and will have worked to destroy the men whom they were each destined for. But once their task is accomplished, the birds will each return to their nest of origin because, it is said: 'Everything returns to its source.'

Since the evil they were burdened with is not exhausted, this evil will turn against their authors and will end up destroying them.

This tale or parable quite clearly expresses the importance of the thoughts and words we send to others, as explained in the previous chapter, highlighting that what we think not only has an effect on our communication with others, but also implies that the register on which we choose to operate has a knock-on effect on ourselves. And this effect helps us to remain in the same register of thoughts, emotions and intentions, whether positive or negative. Hence the importance of practising techniques such as meditation and many others to anchor our automatic thoughts on the positive side. Thinking and feeling happily means seeing life as a glass half full and being able to observe it filling up. Thinking and feeling unhappily, and/or resentfully, means seeing life as a glass half empty and unconsciously forcing ourselves to see it emptying. But this can also reinforce the glass of those around us – or even further afield – to fill or empty, if our thoughts echo theirs. Optimism can therefore become a conscious and effective choice, for ourselves and much more.

In this way, self-contagion and the transmission of thoughts work together in a way. Because when we integrate the importance of managing our thoughts and emotions, it becomes possible to understand the immense responsibility we have to do so.
And by reaching this understanding, we are already helping others to reach it too. By putting this learning into practice, we are helping others to put it into practice. Working on oneself and undergoing path of personal evolution consist in a virtuous circle that not only allows us to evolve, improve our well-being and health, bring us closer to happiness, improve our relationships and our relationship with the world, and enable us to work more effectively and positively in this world, but also and above all, it consists to help this world to get better.

In this context, the role of meditation (and all the techniques that work in the same way, of which there are many and varied) is fundamental and completely misunderstood by most people, and even by some meditators.
In a message to the members *of World Tai Chi & Qi gong Day*, its founder William Douglas quotes the Tao Te Ching and says:

"There is no greater illusion than fear, ... Whoever can see through all fear will always be safe."

He adds:

"The data reveals that the meditative state actually shrinks the 'stress/fear' parts of our brain and develops the 'empathy/compassion' parts of our brain. We then cultivate a sense of peace in our consciousness... and, as science reveals... in our lives and in our world."

I can attest to this myself. When I was in great difficulty, both physically and mentally, the professionals who helped me—doctors, osteopaths, and others—almost all told me that I was "too much in my mental" and advised me to meditate to remedy this.
I sometimes tried to meditate. I took a Zen meditation course and trained in mindfulness meditation. But it remained quite inaccessible and unconvincing to me. I no longer considered meditation to be a fad or something for new-age types, but I had absolutely no grasp of its effects. I also read quite a few articles and even books on the subject. But once again, I understood it all with my "mental". I couldn't manage experience it.
Unfortunately, I read several times that meditation should not be practised to achieve something, but simply to return to the present, to oneself, to the reality of the moment. I understood that it should not be practised with a goal in mind, so I wondered why so many people meditated.

In reality, certain types of meditation (usually guided) do have an immediate effect. This can be relaxation, working on your mood, letting go of emotions such as anger, fear, or others. But my current experience

really confirms what William Douglas says. Since I have been meditating daily and diligently, my fears, my anger, my tendency to criticise and be aggressive, or even to ruminate and complain, my resentments, my low moods, etc. are slowly but surely losing their importance and having less impact on my life. They are still present, and indeed regularly come back through the back door, still torturing me quite often. But I am much more aware of them. I listen to them less. Above all, I am regaining my capacity for empathy, my self-confidence, my indulgence, an ability to ride out difficulties, an enthusiasm for life, a form of humanity that the blows and wounds of life had gradually caused me to lose. The more I meditate, the more I move away from the glass-half-empty mentality and towards the glass-half-full mentality. Since I started meditating, my glass has been filling up. And it works in a virtuous circle. But stopping meditation can reverse this trend. This now makes meditation essential in my eyes.

10. Conclusion

The prospect of having an influence on those around us can be a powerful motivator.

Even if it is not the intention behind making changes in our lives, it can still help to give much more meaning to what we do. This is because it allows us to frame our change within a general change. It can give us courage.

However, trying to influence those around us is not something to strive for when we are on a path of personal development, or only in a very secondary way, or only in relation to those who are on the same path. Understanding this allows us to move away from combative, militant or missionary attitudes. And if we know that another type of influence is at work unconsciously, it allows us to lay down our arms and steer our actions away from such battles.

The most difficult thing is to know how to move forward quietly, and sometimes alone, before the snowball effect takes hold. Because it works like contagion. The more people are affected by an evolution, the faster it accelerates until it eventually reaches everyone. But before that happens, keeping in mind what we need to leave behind and what we are moving towards (new solutions in cooperation with all those who are working in the same direction) can help us to persevere, remain patient, and nurture our motivation and determination.

So, knowing the influencing factors described above can help us understand that we are not standing still, that our drop in the ocean could well turn out to have the effect of a wave, or even a tsunami. Metaphorically speaking, our transformation from caterpillar to butterfly could, with a flap of our wings – in unison with others acting elsewhere whom we do not know – result in a hurricane of beneficial and constructive transformations that will completely change the landscape in which we still live.

TOWARDS A UTOPIA NOT DISCONNECTED FROM REALITY

When what is currently germinating quietly becomes visible, the changes will accelerate very rapidly.

Ideally, in a world where humans have evolved in their consciousness, maturity, communication skills and empathy, we could imagine the disappearance of money.
Only what corresponds to the needs of all would be produced, with respect for all, to be transported where it is needed, with respect for the environment and in a harmonious manner. The Garden of Eden, in a way.
Wealth would disappear from our culture and be replaced, among other things, by abundance. This would require everyone to share a common set of values and for everyone to respect them.

This world would see the disappearance of all our scourges: weapons and wars; rapes, incests, prostitutions; dominations, abuses, harassments, provocations, lies and manipulations; prisons, psychiatric asylums, drugs, casinos, but also banks, stock exchanges, speculation, mutual insurance companies, and most of our administrations and legislation. First of all, this world already exists, or almost exists, in certain cultures, known as "indigenous" cultures.
On the other hand, for our Western culture, this world is still very far away; but undoubtedly less far than the evolution that constituted the acquisition of language and writing.
Dreaming about it allows us to point in the direction we choose to take with every step we take today.

More concretely and closer to our current concerns, as you will have understood, profit is only one of the ways in which the problems of our society can be addressed. I chose it because it is the one that crossed my path and seemed the most obvious to address, and also because it can be understood by the most people (because they feel directly concerned).
I could have chosen others, which I mention extensively in the document: male domination, the dictatorship of rational thinking, and, of course, global warming. But profit is a central issue, which in a way connects all the others and concerns everyone. It is also the theme that best highlights the problem of the balance of power. I can even admit that when I started writing, I didn't have a clear idea that all this would take me so far in understanding the ins and outs of what I was trying to develop. It was by untangling the knots of the subject that it gradually became clear to me.

And it is true that the reasoning and possible solutions I propose may seem like pure utopia.
But this utopia is already engraved in today's reality and will probably come about in a much more subtle way than we can foresee. It will seem increasingly logical and obvious to us and will take shape naturally and probably more quickly than we imagine.

We cannot predict exactly what will happen, but it is important to begin to glimpse what is already emerging and what is possible, and to clearly orient our current choices in those directions. When intentions and efforts combine constructively, the results far exceed expectations. What is imperative is to choose the right direction, which currently means, with our backs against the wall:
to unburden ourselves of the baggage that prevents us from crossing it, and to work hard on this path at our level;
or, symbolised differently, to make a turn of more than 90°: but represented in this way, it implies a form of going backwards, whereas I think it is a huge leap forward that awaits us.

Although the vicious circle of the capitalist system is still leading us towards disaster, the virtuous circle of the evolution of consciousness is already leading us out of it – with no guarantee that we will make it in time, given that we have our backs against the wall.

Despite all the doubts I have as I write this, I remain confident that it is worth expressing.

For even if part of the reasoning were to be flawed, it would not change anything to the root of the problem:

wealth creates poverty
money that inflates on its own is nonsense
the relentless pursuit of growth is the best path to collective suicide
and as long as we link work and income, we will perpetuate all these problems.

The bottle is almost full, and it is time to come out of denial in order to save what can still be saved.
However, I think that the solutions lie more in the approach – the mental process of discovering them – than in predefined, concrete advice. Because there will not be "one" or "ten" solutions, there will be millions.

- The snowflake metaphor

The human has so far been quite mistaken about their purpose, about who they really are, about the meaning their lives should have. We constantly allow ourselves to be taken in by the mirages of glitter, possessions and power. We do not have access to our fluidity. We remain frozen in the state we were born into, conditioned to act as if we were snowflakes, and nothing more.

But we are much more than that; we are the ocean.

We were conceived in a cloud of love, in most cases. Our gestation took place floating between heaven and earth, taking the form of a snowflake, and our landing was overwhelming, even if we no longer remember it. We were welcomed into human society: the snow. A society where each snowflake tries to shine as brightly as possible. Glitter, riches and power are our benchmarks. Those on the surface are the ones who shine, crushing all those below them and turning into icicles that support those above, without being free to leave their position.
And we did not see the time passing.

The seasons are changing and our preoccupation with comparing our crystalline stripes is going out of fashion. We are called to melt, but we struggle to remain in the comfort of the white carpet we have formed all winter. And even when we try to dethrone the surface flakes, we only reverse the roles between those who bask in the sun on the surface and those who are crushed in the darkness.

Until we understand that we are the ocean, we will not be able to move on to the next stage. But the change of season will force us to do so. The atmosphere is warming up and will force more and more of us to melt and make our way to the valley, the rivulets, the gutters, and the ever-widening rivers. And if all goes well, we will all reach the ocean. We will become one, while each of us doing our part, our part as a drop of water.

We must therefore understand that our current state is only one stage in our evolution. We have taken ourselves to be sapiens sapiens: those who know, and who know that they know. But we still know almost nothing. We are not snowflakes, we are simply at the snowflake stage, having passed for a time from the air to the earth, and our next destiny is to melt, to make our way to the ocean, and we can only do this together, otherwise we will never reach it.

Moving on to the next stage does not mean becoming indignant, rebelling, petitioning, demonstrating, or overthrowing those in power to take their place. Our role is to let our crystals, our stripes, our thirst for

power and wealth disappear, and abandon all power struggles with others. To become liquid is to become capable of participating harmoniously in the human game, joining our fluidity to enter the flow, adapting to all the forms that will contain us, without ever opposing them again. This transformation from caterpillar to butterfly is not simply a matter of decision, it is also a long-term gestation. It is not just a change of habits, a change of beliefs, a change of behaviour. It is a metamorphosis in our relationship with the world that we cannot imagine when we set out on the path. It is a journey that never really ends, but which inevitably draws others around us along with us. The snowflakes that have melted inexorably draw the snowflakes around them, without any call to do so. And there is no turning back.

The main challenge is to listen to your heart, consciously putting reason second. And in order to listen to our hearts, we must first bring all our emotional burdens out of the shadows. For these burdens will continue to remind us of themselves, often insidiously, with their infernal clamour making it impossible to listen to our hearts.
Deciding to listen to your heart without calming the noise is a lost cause. The heart will never try to impose itself in the face of the clamour of our emotions. It will never play any power games. It is our conscience that must make choices and calm the clamour in order to learn to hear the songs of the heart that will lead us to our most beautiful gestures, our most beautiful actions, whether it be the part of the hummingbird or the flap of the butterfly's wings.

- One last little push

> *"The world we have created is a product of our thinking; it cannot be changed without changing our thinking. ." Albert Einstein*

Quantum theory and recent discoveries in neuroscience teach us that we are all connected (entanglement); that the reality of what we observe is impacted by our observation, and many other aspects besides. If our observations, and therefore our thoughts, have an impact on the unfolding of reality, then it is necessary to change the way we observe, and therefore think, in order to transform reality.

> *"Our action, the action of looking in anticipation of seeing something, is an act of creation in the simulated universe that is ours." Gregg Braden*

Gregg Braden in his teachings, including his book *"The Divine Matrix"* (2007), Hay House Publisher [287], explains that external reality is akin to a simulation, a kind of testing ground, in which our physical body is our avatar. Our consciousness is connected to it, but is not part of this simulation. By accessing our consciousness (through meditation, work on ourselves, distancing ourselves from our thoughts and emotions), we can then become capable of choosing the experience, the life we want to lead in this scenario.

> *"...only about 5% of our consciousness is conscious, and the remaining 95% is subconscious psychosomatic programming."*
> Joe Dispenza in the book *"Becoming Supernatural - How Common People Are Doing the Uncommon"* (2019), Hay House Publisher [288]

And finally, Joe Dispenza, in his book *"Becoming Superconscious"*, explains that by the age of 35, it is possible that 95% of our thoughts are the result of our unconscious automatisms; and that our conscious thoughts - that is, where choices are possible - are limited to 5% of all the thoughts that occupy us. It is not so much age and percentage that matter, but the phenomenon of repetition of our thoughts and emotions, the presence of conditioning and automatic responses. It is our habits of functioning—whether physical, emotional or mental—that ultimately dictate our thoughts and induce our will to guide them. If our living conditions do not fluctuate much: same job, same rituals, same circle of friends, same environment; and if we do not introduce any unexpected events, changes or evolution, then we feed even more the

thought chains embedded in our cells and the behavioural habits embedded in our bodies. Think, for example, of the way you enter your PIN code. It is the movement that is stored in your memory much more than the four digits. Our habits are therefore so deeply ingrained in our bodies that they no longer need to be influenced by deliberate thought or presence of mind. And our conditioned reactions then become similar to reflexes.

These three concepts, as expressed by Albert Einstein, Gregg Braden, and Joe Dispenza, are very meaningful. Because it means that it is our thoughts that create our reality through the presence of the "expectation" in which they are embedded. And this expectation is a function of both our beliefs and our automatic responses.

A very representative example of this concept is that of people who "succeed". The vast majority of these people "expected" to succeed before they did so, even though they had no rational evidence to guarantee it. Conversely, the vast majority of people who fail are people who "expected" to fail.
Or perhaps not quite. Successful people are people who have failed often. But because they expected to succeed, they kept starting over again and again, bouncing back after each failure, drawing lessons from each experience, honing their skills, with perseverance and determination; because they knew that in the end they would succeed. They "knew" in the sense that their expectation of the potential success of their project was very close to 100%. The content of their thoughts was therefore defined by this expectation.
And it is in this sense that our thoughts create our reality:
If, on the one hand, we choose to think positively, we choose to be optimistic, and we take action to succeed in our endeavours; but on the other hand, our thoughts are occupied by conditioning and beliefs about the difficulty or impossibility of succeeding, or by the fact that chance will determine the outcome, with all the doubts and fears that this entails, etc. Then we will be sowing the seeds of our own failure.
Therefore, as long as we think according to our beliefs and habits of thought, we are destined not to be in control of our lives. Presence, consciousness, working on ourselves to heal our past emotional wounds (which sabotage our positive thoughts and overwhelm us with negative emotions), meditation of course, the information we will integrate about how we function; all these factors can help us transform our way of thinking and, as a result, teach us how to create our reality.

And this works on both an individual and a collective level. If we want to survive and help others survive in today's world, which is still on the road to disaster, we have no choice but to create this new reality, that is, to work on our way of thinking. The more of us who work on it, the more we multiply our chances of succeeding. But, once again, it is on an individual level that we must begin; and doing it together can only help us.

And you would not be wrong to say that I might be deluding myself by thinking this way. Except that not choosing this direction is already a guarantee of failure. Because, as far as I know, there are no miracles on the horizon, and the stage we are at, without the shifts in consciousness I describe above, condemns us to extinction. Therefore, we have nothing to lose by choosing the direction described above, because it is the only one that guarantees that we will give our best to succeed, and that will allow us to stay the course, to do it together, and to try to get everyone to participate.

APPENDIX

A detour through the polyvagal theory

Stephen Porges' polyvagal theory may seem far removed from the topics discussed in this book. That is why I decided to include it in the appendix. Nevertheless, personally, I better and better perceive the link with all the topics discussed in the book. And even if it is not obvious at first glance, the more you delve into this theme, the more it seems unavoidable. Therefore, it would be a mistake to avoid it.

In very simple terms:
The vagus nerve is the longest of all the nerves. It starts in the brain and runs through most of the organs in our thorax and abdomen. Its influence involves almost all of our functions and organs: ears, tongue, neck muscles, heart, lungs, liver, stomach, pancreas, kidneys, intestines, etc.
It is part of the autonomic nervous system and its action, although multiple, can be classified into two vectors. The ventral part of the vagus nerve is active when nothing suspicious is perceived at the sensory and emotional level. The dorsal part is activated when danger signals flash.

According to polyvagal theory, the autonomic nervous system can be represented in three modes of reaction. These are involuntary reactions to external stimuli that our consciousness does not necessarily perceive, but which our nervous system picks up and which we call neuroception.

When our body and senses do not perceive any danger, the ventral branch of the vagus nerve is activated. This allows us to feel safe and promotes our ability to form social bonds.

If danger is perceived, the orthosympathetic nervous system will be stimulated and will trigger an automatic protective response through flight or defence reactions, via our reflexes, emotions and the behaviours that these induce.

And if a greater danger threatens us, the dorsal branch of the vagus nerve will be activated and cause us to freeze or collapse: loss of consciousness, inability to react, or for more prolonged situations: chronic fatigue syndrome, depression, etc.

In principle, we operate most of the time in safety mode, i.e. by activating the ventral branch of the vagus nerve. However, depending on the difficult events we experience, their diversity, duration and repetition, we may remain more often and/or for longer in the other two modes of operation, and sometimes be unable to return to the first. This is particularly the case in the event of significant trauma.

The functioning of the vagus nerve is not voluntary, but it is possible to stimulate the ventral branch, which can influence both our mental and physical health.

I think it is interesting to make the link here between, on the one hand, our ability to manage the switch (as described in the chapter on the balance of power), involving our ability to distance ourselves from power relations and manage our thoughts, emotions and behaviours; and, on the other hand, the existence of this autonomous reaction that can prevent us from doing so.

Gaining a better understanding of this whole system and learning how to manage it can be key to learning serenity, facilitating empathy, and above all, learning to reduce or distance ourselves from all our survival

reactions when we are not directly threatened; and consequently, distancing ourselves from the balance of power and all that it entails.

Everyone experiences small or large traumas on a regular basis throughout their lives, but some experience significantly more severe shocks or experience far more traumas than others. And over time, this leads to a tendency for the orthosympathetic system to be significantly more active and for the ventral branch of the vagus nerve to be under-stimulated, sometimes continuously or almost continuously.
This affects all bodily functions (digestion, breathing, blood circulation, muscle tension in the throat, etc.) and therefore also our stress levels, sleep quality, ability to cope with life events, responsiveness to stimuli, etc.
In parallel, when trauma accumulates, another organ in the brain, the amygdala, which is part of the limbic brain (the emotional brain), also becomes more active, to the point of hypertrophy, i.e. it grows and therefore also becomes overactive. This implies that managing emotions – already more difficult to learn because it depends on reflex functions – becomes even more difficult in this case, as the overactivity of the amygdala and the hyperactivity of the orthosympathetic nervous system are then embedded in the body.

In short, the more blows we take in life – without having the opportunity to learn how to manage our emotions – the more we will tend to age by becoming rigid, experiencing too much stress and, above all, acquiring a propensity to react to the vagaries of life with a survival mode response that is far from wise.

The consequences of this, apart from the impact on health, are that we remain stuck in more primitive behaviours: fighting, fleeing or collapsing at the slightest threat. And a huge number of stimuli are then perceived as threats. So we live in a state of hypervigilance, always on the alert, ready to defend ourselves or to choose flight or avoidance.
However, fight or flight responses are only appropriate when the danger is immediate: when the real disaster (not imagined or potential for the future) is in the present.

In a way, as it is rare for life not to treat us badly, if our education has not taught us to manage our emotions, we will increasingly transform ourselves, taking refuge in power struggles and preferring rational argumentation to relational communication.

Extrapolating, I think that our tendency to use combative behaviour – which is very widespread, almost universal among humans – is linked to the fact that our learning is very often littered with small traumas, and our entire psychological development is then built on these trauma-related behaviours. And this is passed on from generation to generation.
We need to heal from this. Humanity will not survive as long as it is only capable of waging war, fighting any opponent, and cooperating only when everything is going well.

On an even broader scale, I think that collectively, the responses to the climate crisis, the consequences of the war in Ukraine, the COVID pandemic, and also the energy crisis... ; all the current responses taken by the leaders of most countries, particularly in the West, are much more focused on the emergency, and therefore on survival, to the point of obscuring the medium- and long-term consequences of these responses. Solidarity between countries is virtually non-existent, with each country defending its own interests and inertia remaining the dominant trend. This is exactly what happens when the ventral branch of the vagus nerve is deactivated.

I will take the situation of the war in Ukraine as an example, where (in the West), rather than calming the situation, we continue to add fuel to the fire (in the literal sense of the term) by sending massive amounts of weapons to Ukraine and attempting to suffocate the Russian economy. This is a purely survivalist attitude that exacerbates the situation, distances solutions, further stimulates Russia's warmongering, and results in killing rather than saving lives, especially as it is causing food and energy shortages and

plunging hundreds of millions of people into poverty, and almost as many into famine and, for some of them, death. And that's not to mention the nuclear risk.
I am not wishing for or approving of Russia's occupation of Ukraine, but what I see are the consequences of this endless escalation of armament and belligerence, which does not offer a single glimmer of a solution to the conflict and which is creating catastrophe after catastrophe, even on a global scale. And these attitudes are like an autonomic nervous system in which the ventral branch of the vagus nerve no longer has a say.

Returning to the vagus nerve and our tendency to favour survival behaviours, what we need to consider is a kind of re-education for everyone.
In concrete terms, as the majority of young people have not yet been affected by too many traumas, it is at the level of education and teaching that learning should be offered. But this is not yet the case. In the absence of this, the most effective method that can be accessed from childhood and throughout life is meditation. This should be integrated into daily teaching as soon as possible. And new techniques can have an even faster impact than meditation. When these techniques are taught to everyone, we may begin to change the level of civilisation.

To better understand polyvagal theory and its link to trauma, here is an excellent video published by *The Trauma Foundation* [289] - [ref 15bis].

HERE BEGINS THE LATTER HALF OF THIS BOOK

Your reading is not over, it has only just begun:
I now invite you to read or watch a selection of the best references, videos, articles, and other sources of information that I have linked to or mentioned throughout this book. Most of them are enjoyable to read or watch, as they put into words things that we sense but that remain either muddled or unspoken in our society. This can help to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

If you have any comments or additional information about the book, please feel free to send them to me. All feedback is welcome at the following email address:

clairebe (at) ik.me

REFERENCES

The selection of forty or so internet links provided below includes references cited throughout the book, marked with the abbreviation "Ref" accompanied by a number and a link to the relevant chapter.
I have reorganised the chronology from how they appear in the book, as I wanted to rank them according to how interesting I attach to each one. And I therefore want to place much greater emphasis on the best ones, those that make an impression, those that contain essential or highly relevant information, those that inspire reflection, and those that touch the heart

To indicate the level of interest I attach to them, I have simply marked them with a star.

These references (including those not included in the list) were verified before publication. However, it is possible that some of the hyperlinks provided may have been removed from the platforms or websites since then. I hope that the vast majority will remain in place. (The links were last checked in March 2026.)

> Note regarding language: For all articles offered in French, if you are not sufficiently proficient in this language, I suggest you translate them for free via the website:
> https://www.deepl.com/en/translator. This company is independent of GAFAM. The quality is not entirely impeccable, but it is already much better than it used to be, and errors are becoming increasingly rare. In any case, it is entirely possible to understand a text using this type of programme. Also, your browser offers probably automatic translations.
> For videos in another language on YouTube, it is also possible in most cases to obtain automatic subtitles in English or any other language. To activate this option: first click on the second icon at the bottom right of the video, which is a white rectangle, and activate the subtitles. Then click on the third icon in the options, which is a cogwheel. Select "subtitles", scroll down to the bottom of the list, and select "translate automatically". Scroll down the list to the letter E and select "English" or any other language.
> As the translation is automatic, there may be a few errors. Some words may be completely inappropriate, but overall, the translation is generally of fairly good quality.

Ref 1 **** BOOK**

If you had to read just one book to understand the concept of non-violence, it would be
Satish Kumar's ***"Your are therefore I am - A declaration of dependance"*** (2002), published by Bloomsbury:
https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/you-are-therefore-i-am-9781903998182/
In this book, the author writes autobiographically about the Jain religion (in the first part of the book), which offers a conception of non-violence in its purest form, very similar to that promoted by Gandhi.

Ref 2 *** VIDEO**

video of the film by Denis van Waerebeke, written with Sabrina Massen, ***"How to feed the world"*** (2013 – 9'03")
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNw9wRBZlNs]
This simple, relatively short video is very educational and outlines the current state of the world. It schematically shows some of the vicious circles that lead some to become rich and others to become poor, to the point of destitution and death. Even if you are very knowledgeable on the subject, it will serve as a good reminder.

Ref 3 *** VIDEO**

The video of Paula Stone Williams' TEDx talk (15'24") *entitled* ***"I've lived as a man & a woman -- here's what I learned"*** provides a very representative overview, with great tact, respect and accuracy, of the abuse of power by men that punctuates women's daily lives.
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrYx7HaUlMY].
And if you enjoyed that, don't hesitate to watch this next talk (13'19"), in which she goes even further: *"What I realised about men -- after I transitioned genders"*
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edLQdf4o0cg].
Paula Stone Williams sums it up well when she addresses men about their privileges and the difficulty women have in taking their place:

> *"You started closer to the finish line than anyone else."*

Ref 4 *** BOOK**

Book*:* ***"Bullshit Jobs - a theory"*** by David Graeber – Publisher: Simon & Schuster (2019)
[https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/Bullshit-Jobs/David-Graeber/9781501143335]
This fascinating book sheds completely new light on the growing and phenomenal amount of useless work done in our society, and on an entire social class, generally well-educated and well-paid, who perform mountains of useless work or supervise the work of others who would work just as well, if not better, without supervision:

Ref 5 *** BOOK**

Book, in French, published in late 2021 and written by historian Lucile Peytavin: ***"Le coût de la virilité"*** *(The Cost of Masculinity)* Ed. Le livre de Poche,
[https://www.livredepoche.com/livre/le-cout-de-la-virilite-9782253195702/]
This book masterfully highlights our blindness to the obvious, concerning the place of male violence in our society. We know implicitly, and from experience, everything that is said in the book. But we ignore it because we have internalised these rules. Between 80% and 99% of violence in our society, depending on the area, is perpetrated by men. The book lists all the available statistics and calculates the cost to France.
Here is a video that gives an idea of the book's content, presented by Laurène Gris and Estefania Gagey on Brut (4'12"): [https://www.brut.media/fr/news/la-veritable-cause-de-l-insecurite-absente-de-la-campagne-presidentielle-63cedc1a-f107-465b-a5db-80f45e0d93d5].

Ref 6 *** VIDEO and ARTICLE**

A very short video in which Robert Lustig sets out his **theory on pleasure and happiness**.
[https://www.youtube.com/shorts/-o04MUEfapE]
Material wealth and the pursuit of possessions, like any other pursuit of pleasure, is addictive; which is also inversely proportional to the ability to achieve happiness.

> *"The more you seek pleasure, the more unhappy you will be."*

This topic has been covered by the media in relation to research on the subject by American endocrinologist Robert Lustig:
[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/09/pursuit-of-pleasure-modern-day-addiction]

Ref 7 *** VIDEO**

The scientific discoveries of the past century in quantum physics really tease us when we realise that **the result of an experiment is influenced by the observer**. A very nice animated video explanation (5'12") on this subject can be found online at: *"Captain Quantum - What The Bleep Do We Know"* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WV1SMoVYDM] or via any search engine using the phrase *"What the bleep entanglement"* in case the link has been removed.

This video is an excerpt from the animation taken from the film *"What The Bleep Do We Know"* (2004), which is also worth watching and can be found in English, French and other languages by searching for the film's name online. There is even a longer version, over 2½ hours long, entitled *"Down The Rabbit Hole"* (2006). These two films offer a perspective on reality that is not yet widespread, and which involves scientific knowledge as well as psychological and spiritual development in order to be adopted. To achieve this, they offer a documentary in the form of interviews with a wide range of personalities, including many scientists, supplemented by a cinematic narrative and animations.

Ref 8 *** VIDEO**

In addition to the other influencing factors discussed in the book, there is our ability to "broadcast" our thoughts and emotions outside the channels of verbal and written language, which may overlap in part with that of morphogenetic fields. This happens on an unconscious level, both on the part of the transmitters and the receivers that we are.

To better understand the concept, I suggest you watch the following video (14'36") of an interview with Anna Breytenbach, who talks about sharks and their reasons for attacking humans (which, in fact, happens very rarely): ***"Anna Breytenbach communicates with Great White Shark"*** (2015). What she says allows us to see our conceptions of the world, nature, and what we do with it from a completely different perspective.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTdIMC6NZU4&feature=youtu.be&inf_contact_key=3fbd6de52deeb21be013a14a9ce48df1680f8914173f9191b1c0223e68310bb1].

Ref 9 *** VIDEO**

Video of the TEDx talk (9'32") by Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, occupational and organisational psychologist: ***"Why do so many incompetent men become leaders?"*** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeAEFEXvcBg].

This short talk explains how the distribution of power in our society, and in parallel of money, is not so much the result of a plan devised by a privileged few, but rather the result of a combination of incompetence and greed for power and profit among the majority of those who hold that power and profit, who also happen to be predominantly men.

Ref 10 *** BOOK**

Book by Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson - ***"The Spirit Level - Why Equality is Better for Everyone"*** (2010), Penguin Publisher

[https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/179241/the-spirit-level-by-pickett-richard-wilkinson-kate/9780241954294]

This book helps to understand, through numerous examples and statistics, the link between the level of happiness and well-being in a population and the extent of social inequality within that same population. By immersing oneself in the content throughout the reading, one ultimately grasps the full extent of the inefficiency of the profit-driven culture in which we live in. Rereading the summary of the book on the page referenced above, I realise how important reading this book was in helping me write my own.

Ref 11 *** VIDEO**

In the past, sex education was virtually non-existent, replaced by taboos and prohibitions: no sex before marriage, and that was that. Currently, except for the odd lesson given occasionally, a bit like the sporadic cultural visits organised by schools, it is rather pornography that serves as sex education for many teenagers today, as they receive too little or too minimalist education from their parents or at school, and often disconnected from the emotional sphere.
If you are unaware of the reality of these films or refuse to acknowledge their destructive content, here is a short TEDx talk by Maria Ahlin (17'38" - 2019) which details many aspects of this issue without forcing you to watch the images in question: ***"Let's Talk Porn | Maria Ahlin | TEDxGöteborg"***
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DBTb71UzPmY] Better no sex education than this kind of education.

Ref 12 *** VIDEO**

To help understand the speed of global warming and the need to quickly shake up our habits in response, here is a very short animated video (24 seconds): ***"CarbonBudgetBucket"*** from the *Global Carbon Project*, which leaves no doubt about the acceleration of the phenomenon between 1870 and 2019 and helps us to better understand the senselessness of not reacting more quickly:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwHLZuUuE2s].

Ref 13 *** VIDEO**

It is not a foregone conclusion that we will be able to become numerous enough to make the shift in our hearts in time, on a large scale; because the dysfunctions in society and the role of negative influences are not going to stop anytime soon, and are pushing us strongly to stay on track, to degrade our behaviour and to lose awareness of who we really are. An excellent illustration of this was brought to the screen in the 2016 video clip (3'15") by **Moby & The Void Pacific Choir, entitled *"Are You Lost In The World Like Me"***. The animation is by Steve Cutts
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VASywEuqFd8]. What is described there was already visible more than ten years ago. It has now become widespread.

Ref 14 *** ARTICLE**

RTBF article in French ***"Le monde financier serait-il dirigé par des psychopathes ?"*** *(Is the financial world run by psychopaths?)* by Julie Calleeuw, (2012)
[https://www.rtbf.be/article/le-monde-financier-serait-il-dirige-par-des-psychopathes-7340243?id=7340243]
– an article that appears anodyne at first glance (among thousands of daily news reports) but provides key information that helps us better understand the extent to which our so-called democratic society entrusts colossal power to people who are clearly incapable of using it wisely.

Ref 15 *** VIDEO**

Thinking of being right is already a logical fallacy in most situations. Our cognitive biases deceive us almost constantly, even if they do not prevent us from living satisfactorily or acting effectively in life. This short video (in French - 9'30") on cognitive biases, produced by Arte as part of ***"La Fabrique de l'ignorance"*** *(The Factory of Ignorance)* via an interview with Albert Moukheiber, a doctor of neuroscience specialising in this field, is both very interesting and thought-provoking:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQ52qcUcmhE].

Ref 15 bis *** VIDEO**

In addition to the appendix on **polyvagal theory**, here is a very informative video from the *Trauma Foundation* (2021) that helps us understand the importance of learning to manage or re-educate our autonomic nervous system when certain episodes in our past lives, such as traumatic shocks or repeated destabilising events, have impacted our nervous system and therefore our biology. We suffer the

consequences in the present, but there are ways to free ourselves from these consequences that imprison us and poison our health, our relationships, and our ability to live fully and actively.
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdIQRxwT1I0]

Ref 16 ** VIDEO**

Whether we like it or not, all our reasoning is coloured by our psychology (intentions, conditioning, beliefs, impulses, emotions, etc.), and most of the time this is unconscious.
To better understand this, here is a short video from the TEDx conference (in French - 18'36") ***"A la découverte de notre cerveau"*** *(Discovering our brain)* given by Albert Moukheiber, who explains it clearly with very compelling examples:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_soKgjGzrU&list=RDCMUCsT0YIqwnpJCM-mx7-gSA4Q&start_radio=1]

Ref 17 ** BOOK**

As we evolve in consciousness, we will no longer pass off as rational choices those that are guided by selfish interests, or under the influence of negative emotions, or even by reflex or instinct.
This is explained very well in Thierry Janssen's book ***"Vivre en paix"*** *(*Living in Peace), (2014) -
[https://thierryjanssen.com/pages/vivre-en-paix?locale=fr]

Ref 18 ** BOOK**

Book ***"Brave New World"*** by Aldous Huxley, (1932), Ed. Plon
While it is possible to draw many parallels between this book, written nearly a century ago, and what we are experiencing in today's world, fortunately there are many more differences. The complexity of our surroundings, the diversity of how each community and each person functions, and the presence of numerous sources of creativity, enchantment, a return to nature, personal and spiritual evolution, as well as alternatives to everything that conditions us to follow the implicit rules of the system, mean that we can still hope to build and achieve a truly better world.
[https://www.lisez.com/livre-grand-format/le-meilleur-des-mondes/9782259221269]

Ref 19 ** FABLE**

Fable he fable ***"The money myth exploded"*** by Louis Even (1936) - just four years after Aldous Huxley's book *"Brave New World"*.
[https://www.erikhansen.ca/money_myth.htm]
This fable provides a relatively simple way of understanding certain excesses of our economic world, while explaining the basics of financial mechanisms such as money creation, interest, inflation, etc.

Ref 20 ** TALE**

"The Monkey Business: A Tale of Market Manipulation"
[https://asyoli.com/story-the-monkey-business-a-tale-of-market-manipulation/]. A kind of metaphor for our economic, political and financial system. Still relevant today, now more than ever.

Ref 21 ** VIDEOS**

"Money as Debt" by Paul Grignon, (2008 – 52 min)
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdaOwiQcr4A]
This video provides a better understanding of the abuses that underpin our economy.
It focuses mainly on the creation of money and reveals a number of inconsistencies in how it is managed by banks and governments. Unfortunately, the beginnings of solutions proposed, which are only briefly mentioned, seem to be based on the same type of reasoning that created the current situation.

However, this video effectively conveys the absurdity of the entire system. In the past, each absurd rule has led to new obstacles, which have been overcome by even more absurd rules. And this remains true today, for example when we look at how the energy crisis of 2022 was created by setting energy prices in an absurd manner, and how attempts are being made to resolve it.
However, a recent article seems to herald a way out towards a little more wisdom:
[https://www.rtbf.be/article/et-si-les-banques-privees-ne-pouvaient-plus-creer-de-la-monnaie-11176794]
Preventing private banks from creating money would indeed be a giant step towards greater consistency and fairness in the management of money around the world.

Ref 22 ** VIDEO**

The following video by Gregg Braden (30'30") ***"The Science of Heart-Brain Harmony with Gregg Braden"*** discusses recent and surprising information about the neurological functioning of the heart in connection with the brain - the heart being, in turn, a small brain. To illustrate his point, he gives the astonishing example of a heart transplant, after which it became impossible to ignore the memory linked to the heart
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hir6I-RfOiY]

Ref 23 ** VIDEO**

Here is a **technique proposed by Gregg Braden** in a 12'30" video, which presents a form of cardiac coherence and, despite the very rational discourse proposed, allows you to directly experience consciousness in the heart. Trying it is to adopt it. It takes 5-6 minutes, in the second part of the video:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oclqLaqS6n8].

Ref 24 ** TRAINING - THERAPY**

Ashok Gupta's therapeutic programme:
[https://www.guptaprogram.com/]
This method is designed to help heal various syndromes, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, or even long Covid. The advantage of this programme lies in the wide range of information, techniques and advice it offers, which are universal in nature and only partially found in other methods. I am thinking in particular of several of the techniques and guided meditations it offers. They are truly effective in helping you reconnect with your heart, calm your mind and regain serenity. These techniques and meditations have almost magical, or at least very surprising, effects and allow you to consciously and permanently (sometimes in several separate exercises) let go of recurring and destructive negative thoughts and emotions in order to truly connect with your heart. The *"Surrender"* and *"Soften & Flow"* meditations are particularly effective.

Ref 25 ** VIDEO**

"Eco-meditation" by Dawnson Church, available free of charge at:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWMTcpX4z2A].
This 22-minute meditation helps to calm the mind quite easily, enter into cardiac coherence, and also focus on the heart and the feelings associated with it. This establishes a calmer, more positive, more empathetic state of mind in the hours following the practice, allowing you to be less affected by events that can generate negative emotions.

Ref 25bis ** ARTICLE**

"The Thoughtful Megaphone" *by* Lynne McTaggart
In this May 2021 article, Lynne McTaggart describes the phenomenon of thought transmission from a more scientific perspective: that of training, synchronisation, resonance and the power of intention. This applies to both objects and living beings.

On a human level, according to several surprising studies cited in the article, we observe the merging of brains and the synchronisation of bodily rhythms (heartbeat, breathing) when people cooperate in a significant way, for example during group musical improvisation, the sending of intention between partners in a couple, or the joint work of jugglers. Lynne McTaggart also discusses the healing power that can be used in these circumstances (she herself trains groups to use it in her *"power of 8"* training courses). She explains that certain conditions and mental states make this fusion even more powerful, as do the intentions of the people involved, particularly when those intentions are altruistic, to the point where they can influence events on a global scale.
[https://lynnemctaggart.com/the-thoughtful-megaphone/?utm_campaign=&utm_content=Lynne%27s+newsletter%3A+The+thoughtful+megaphone&utm_medium=email&utm_source=lynmctaggart]

Ref 26 ** VIDEO**
Lecture on ***"Arithmetic, Population and Energy"*** *(*2012) by the late Dr Albert Bartlett, when he was Professor of Physics at the University of Colorado. This is the complete lecture (or course) from which the text in the chapter on the logarithmic effect of growth is taken. The website offers the video (1 hour 14 minutes), as well as transcripts in English, French and Spanish. The full version provides many more examples that help to understand the concept of the exponential function, without relying too heavily on mathematical concepts. This makes it possible to truly understand the concept of growth outside the specific context of economics and to clearly grasp the danger posed by the choice of economic growth.
[https://www.albartlett.org/presentations/arithmetic_population_energy.html],

Ref 26bis * VIDEO**
This 16-minute TEDx video presents Landon Wilcock's testimony *entitled "**Reimagining masculinity; my journey as a male sexual assault survivor***". Through the traumatic situation he experienced, his testimony provides a better understanding of the educational indoctrination into masculinity or virility that is inherent in our culture:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWWPZlaq35U].

Ref 27 * VIDEO**
This video report has been removed from the internet. It was a documentary, in French, by François Rola and Philippe Lagnier entitled ***"C'est cher d'être pauvre"*** (It's expensive to be poor) (2010) about the commercial advantages and privileges offered to the wealthiest, and conversely, the fees and surcharges imposed on the less wealthy, despite any moral or logical justification.

Ref 28 * ARTICLE and BOOK**
Milgram's experiment on ***"Obedience to Authority"*** was published in book form by its author in 1974 (Harper Collins Publishers):
https://www.harpercollins.com/products/obedience-to-authority-stanley-milgram?variant=32207512207394,
This experiment is really worth knowing about. Although we believe ourselves to be endowed with conscience and a sense of responsibility as adults, the experiment shows that the vast majority of participants, and this could be any one of us, are capable of inflicting unjustified torture on other people simply by submitting to authority. A summary of the experiment can be found in the Wikipedia article:
[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exp%C3%A9rience_de_Milgram].

Ref 29 * ARTICLES**
Six detailed articles in French, from the RTBF programme *"#Investigation"*: ***"Sur les routes cachées de notre argent : quand nos banques investissent dans le sale, le toxique et le guerrier"*** (On the

hidden paths of our money: when our banks invest in dirty, toxic and war-related industries), dated 29/04/2020, produced by Emmanuel Morimont.
With the exception of a few sustainable banks, all banks are involved (although the report focuses mainly on the largest Belgian banks). We blindly entrust our money to people who use it in a harmful and destructive way:
[https://www.rtbf.be/info/dossier/investigation/detail_sur-les-routes-cachees-de-notre-argent-quand-nos-banques-investissent-dans-le-sale-le-toxique-et-le-guerrier?id=10486632]
[https://www.rtbf.be/info/dossier/investigation/detail_kbc-investit-dans-des-centres-de-detention-pour-migrants-aux-etats-unis?id=10489708]
[https://www.rtbf.be/info/dossier/investigation/detail_quand-les-geants-du-petrole-s-invitent-dans-les-fonds-durables-des-banques?id=10491592]
[https://www.rtbf.be/info/dossier/investigation/detail_ing-vous-propose-d-investir-durablement-dans-l-armement?id=10492615]
[https://www.rtbf.be/info/dossier/investigation/detail_belfius-huile-de-palme-mineurs-exploites-et-pollution-dans-un-fonds-durable?id=10493768]
[https://www.rtbf.be/info/dossier/investigation/detail_banques-et-maintenant-j-investis-dans-quoi?id=10494169]

Ref 30 * VIDEO**

Video **interview (in French - 1h30) by Thinkerview in 2019 with Gaël Giraud,** Jesuit priest, former financier, and currently (among other things) economist, author and research director at the CNRS. Among other roles, he has also been chief executive of the Agence Française de Développement (a non-profit public bank that finances development projects in southern countries). In the interview, he explains in a very concise and eloquent manner a mountain of economic and financial concepts that provide an overview of the total absurdity of the current economic and financial world, and the total impotence of the political world held hostage, even if he does not express it in these terms at all
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oFARgqG0NA].
Another video (not mentioned in the book) features a 10-minute excerpt, in French, from another interview with Gaël Giraud, in which he explains (from 1'30") the cynicism of major financiers, who are very well informed about the global situation and global warming, down to the smallest detail, and who, quite wittingly, do not want to change their habits and think they can take refuge in countries that they believe will be less affected in the north, or in bunkers
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWdL5VtFCxQ].

Ref 31 * VIDEO**

Video (2'21") explaining how **the speed of Covid contamination** is calculated, in order to better understand the need to comply with the distancing measures recommended or imposed by the authorities in most countries. The contagion explained in this way teaches us, through experience, about the exponential function, which is comparable to economic growth and population growth.
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80UDl4aq9PU]

Ref 32 * ARTICLE**

"World Population Growth" (2013) - authors: Max Roser, Hannah Ritchie and Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, published on the website: [https://ourworldindata.org/],
on the page: [https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth]**.**
This article on global population growth is richly illustrated and documented. I highly recommend taking a look. It features an impressive number of diagrams and schematics of all kinds that are highly representative of all aspects of global population growth.

Ref 33 * VIDEO**

Here is a **short video (1'22") to illustrate the concepts of implicit and explicit.** It is an attention test from 1999 proposed by Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris. Concentrate hard and follow the instructions carefully.
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo]
Only read the following paragraphs in italics if you have watched the video, otherwise you will not benefit from them.

> *Only a small percentage of people who watch the video and follow the instructions given beforehand are able to recognise the absurdity of it.*
> *Once this absurdity has been explained, it is no longer possible to count in the same way.*
>
> *The subject of the video is not the implicit and explicit in our modes of operation. However, it perfectly illustrates how this works in this context as well.*
>
> *At first, it is not easy to spot the inconsistencies that are so well integrated into our culture and that we take for granted. But once you get used to seeing them, your eye becomes sharper, and you end up spotting them naturally and more and more, to the point where you end up being shocked every time; and even more shocked to see that it continues to go unnoticed by the majority.*

Ref 34 * WEBSITE and BOOK**

"Ça commence par moi" *(It starts with me) (2018)*
Julien Vidal's initiative - via his book and website - in French:
[https://cacommenceparmoi.org/],
are the result of a challenge the author set himself, integrating, every day, and for a year, a change in his habits towards greater sobriety and respect for the environment. He proposes these actions on the page: [https://cacommenceparmoi.org/agir/].

Ref 35 * BOOK**

"1984" by George Orwell, (1949), Penguin Publishers
Despite its age, this book remains a best-selling anticipation novel. It prefigures a world where freedom of speech and action have completely disappeared. The book has not aged too badly. Digitalisation, with all its potential for intrusion into private life, drones, ubiquitous cameras, the current existence of real imperialist dictatorships; all the ingredients are there to make a 1984-style cocktail possible even today. Nevertheless, my opinion remains that there are many other ingredients we can use to protect ourselves from entering such a hopeless world.
[https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/441676/1984-by-orwell-george/9781784878979]

Ref 36 * ARTICLE**

"Les 10 vertus thérapeutiques du sourire" *(The 10 therapeutic virtues of smiling)* (2021), French article by Sophie Guittat, on the *Mieux Vivre Autrement* website:
[this link is unfortunately disabled: https://www.mieux-vivre-autrement.com/les-10-vertus-therapeutiques-du-sourire.html].
Smiling is a little-known factor that influences our state of mind. It is much more difficult to think negatively when we smile, even when it is a forced smile. The very act of smiling, although it contracts the muscles of the face, has a relaxing effect. You relax and loosen your teeth. Smiling also triggers the release of endorphins (the pleasure hormone), dopamine (the motivation and pleasure hormone) and serotonin (the hormone that prevents depression). Conversely, it inhibits the production of cortisol (the stress hormone). Smiling also stimulates the immune system and reduces blood pressure in stressful situations. In other words, smiling makes us more positive, even when we have no reason to smile.

What's more, a smile, if it's not insincere, is also contagious and can reassure the people around us. This can therefore help to make relationships more pleasant and our "opponents" more conciliatory.
This video (in French) can maybe compensate the article :
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_uXNvRW32YU]

Ref 37 ** VIDEO

A video of the conference (in French - 1h29) proposed by the Rosalux association, by Aline Farès, a former banker, who explains in a rather playful way some of the basic rules of the banking system: ***"Chroniques d'une ex-banquière"*** *(Chronicles of a former banker) (2017)*
The most informative part begins around the 40-minute mark, when she starts to explain the separation of banking activities.
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnqBHcO7v4g]

Ref 38 ** BOOK

Hervé Kempf, in his book, in French, ***"Comment les riches détruisent la planète"*** *(How the Rich Are Destroying the Planet)* (2007), Ed. Du Seuil, (republished by Editions Points in 2020) provides data and analysis thereof, on all the behaviours of the richest and most powerful class on the planet and, indirectly, on their complete unconsciousness and inherent unwillingness to use their money and power to improve life on Earth.
[https://www.editionspoints.com/ouvrage/comment-les-riches-detruisent-la-planete-herve-kempf/9782757888322]

Ref 39 ** BOOK

"Oneness vs the 1%: Shattering Illusions, Seeding Freedom" (2019) - New Internationalist Publications Ltd Publisher by Vandana Shiva
In parallel with Hervé Kempf's book mentioned above, Vandana Shiva describes, with numerous references to support her arguments, how the richest 1% of the planet's population have established and even imposed, by circumventing democratic processes, the most destructive modes of operation in all areas: industrial, agricultural, financial, energy, health, food, cultural, etc.
[https://www.chelseagreen.com/product/oneness-vs-the-1/?srsltid=AfmBOoqOSu-wNp4HJGG6hA7YNmYZWWDLhBoiKfd8qUwPV2Plbaf4dPyM]

Ref 40 ** VIDEO

In a video of a conference (in French) in Brussels in 2014, Frédéric Laloux presents his book ***Reinventing Organizations*** (2015), which discusses a new type of company, even more evolved than cooperatives or democratic companies. I highly recommend watching it: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZKqPoQiaDE]. Improving the functioning of these companies depends on the evolution of each of their workers. Hierarchy disappears almost entirely. The company structure operates on a network basis, and each employee is given maximum responsibility. The human aspect becomes paramount, both for colleagues and for customers. These companies perform better financially and tend to grow easily.

Ref 41 ** ARTICLE

"La cohérence cardiaque" *(Cardiac coherence)* an article in French by Véronique Lachenaud (2022), introduces the technique of cardiac coherence, which, through the management of breathing and thoughts, leads to regulate heart rate variability, thereby helping to bring breathing, heart and mental state into harmony:
Regular practice improves health in many ways and helps to better manage stress, thoughts and emotions, making it easier to navigate everyday events. There are many videos online to help you practise. The 3-6-5 technique: 3 times a day, 6 breaths of 5 seconds each, is the easiest to practise.
[https://www.theraneo.com/humanaessence-naturaessence-article-7343.html]

Here are three more references that were not mentioned in the book. Although they are not recent, they are definitely worth checking out.

Ref 42 * VIDEO**

Interview with Aurélien Barrau, in French, on 15/05/2019 on "Brut" about his book: ***"Le plus grand défi de l'humanité – face à la catastrophe écologique et sociale"*** *(The greatest challenge facing humanity – ecological and social disaster)* (2019).
This video (1 hour 5 minutes) is fascinating if you share Aurélien Barrau's (astrophysicist) perspective on the state of the world. He certainly has no shortage of arguments and knows how to present them convincingly, simply by dotting the i's and crossing the t's.
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=dfZT898ZClA]
If you don't have an hour to spare, there is a shorter interview (in French - 17 minutes) taken from the programme *"C'est à vous"* on France2 on 9 May 2019.
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckaErodDLnQ]

Ref 43 ** VIDEOS**

A series of three videos (21 minutes in total), entitled ***"The Story of Stuff"***, produced by two American NGOs based in San Francisco: the *Tides Foundation* and the *Funders Workgroup for Sustainable Production and Consumption*. This series of videos, published in 2009, provides a fairly simplified but very effective overview of the traditional cycle of our industry, from extraction to production, commercialisation and disposal:
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wpWioxQ1XOg]
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1D9J8jiBeqw]
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnYUT9TkNOU]
Whatever your level of awareness of "things", it's worth watching.

Ref 44 ** PODCAST**

Christian Jacquiau's 2000 lecture, in French, on ***"Les coulisses de la grande distribution"*** *(Behind the scenes of large retail)*:
[http://mezzo.kolibria.com/20030326_christian_jacquiau.mp3]
The same lecture presented in short segments:
[http://collectif.croac.free.fr/html/sommaire_conf_jacquiau.htm]
Although this lecture is quite long, it is thoroughly fascinating. The speaker talks at a fairly rapid pace, so there is no time to get bored.
Although this lecture is dated (early 2000s), it remains highly relevant today. Things have probably gotten much worse, even if European legislation has likely limited the damage, but more often than not, with a substantial lag.

What is interesting about this information is that it could be compared to what goes on behind the scenes in so many other areas: behind the scenes at banks, pharmaceutical companies, oil and petrochemical companies, car manufacturers, cigarette companies, biotechnology companies, advertising agencies... All sectors are affected. The methods of operation are probably different, but the mindsets that govern them are quite similar: exploitation to the bitter end, injustice, insatiable pursuit of profit, total indifference to human, environmental and other damage, manipulation of all players, including politicians, with corruption to boot, etc. etc. We cannot really generalise, but the presence of all these abuses is everywhere. And what makes it invisible to the average person, or difficult to grasp or imagine, is that either it is too big, too incredible, or it is mixed in with operating methods that are perfectly correct, legal and beneficial. This makes it difficult to sort through and see the horror that lies beneath it all.

Hundreds of other examples could be cited. What is important is not to know all the details of everything that is dysfunctioning, as we would never finish. The important thing is to understand the general trends and to get involved in learning how to function differently ourselves, knowing where to find information, how to learn, practise, experiment and move forward with perseverance.

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As a complement to the references above, I have also chosen to include references to articles I have written that are cited in the book (as well as one or two stories). Most of the articles are my own work, but for some topics, they are summaries or presentations of books. I am including the presentation I made of each one on my website. And if you would like to have a more general overview of all the articles published on my website, please refer to the detailed menu page:
[https://sechangersoi.be/menudetaille.htm].
I have also included among the references certain stories featured on my website that are mentioned in the book.

These references are listed below in chronological order of appearance in the book:

Ref A - ARTICLE
"It's our complacency to the system which allows it to perpetuate"
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Our%20convenience.htm]
Our complacency consists in blaming capitalism, the rich, and political and economic leaders as responsible for all the harm of the system, without truly realising not only that our own mentality is working on the same mode of thinking as the one which we are denouncing, but also that we benefit from certain advantages of this system, which enslave us and force us to actively participate in it, casually, without even realising it.

Ref B - TALE
"The boiled frog":
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/5EN-Tales/Theboiledfrog.htm]
The world is ready to fall into chaos, and we don't see it, hypnotised as we are by television, advertising, consumerism, glitz and glamour. The wake-up call could be a harsh one.

Ref C - ARTICLE
***"Ecological footprint and passive violence"*:**
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Passiveviolence.htm]
Starting with Arun Gandhi's TEDx talk, presented in video, which introduces the concept of passive violence; this article aims to create links between the realities presented in the news and our everyday actions. Our consumption is not without consequences for the state of the world. Through consumption, we have learnt to practice passive violence. Our culture conditions us to do so and calls on us to kindly look away from our responsibilities in the face of the realities of suffering and destruction that this engenders. Hundreds of millions of people have died of hunger or malnutrition worldwide; and even more are currently living in poverty, whilst we go about our lives as if this did not exist. Until we are able to remove our blinders and face this head-on, making the link with our own everyday behaviours, hundreds of millions of people will continue to suffer and disappear amid near-total indifference.
Changing the way we view these facts and adopting a new perspective reawakens our humanity and enables us to change our behaviours by reducing our ecological footprint in a more consistent manner. By adopting this more realistic perspective, a whole path opens up before us to change, at our own scale, whatever can still be changed.

Ref D - TALE
"The American Tourist and Mexican Fisherman"
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/5EN-Tales/AmericanMexican.htm]
Why should we work ourselves to the bone to earn a living ('earn a life' in French) when we already have one? A huge number of jobs will disappear, along with all the wasteful, pointless and polluting production. In other words: when the economy serves the community and is dedicated solely to meeting everyone's needs.

Ref E - ARTICLE
"Collective intelligence" *(in French)*:
[https://sechangersoi.be/4Articles/intelligencecollective01.htm]
It is called collective intelligence or collective wisdom. It appears in certain circumstances within groups gathered for a positive, constructive purpose, when a certain cohesion is present, and when each person sets aside their personal concerns and interests in order to make themselves available for collective work. Each participant has access to something new that does not correspond to their own potential or that of each individual in the group. It is a kind of knowledge, a different perspective on what concerns the group.

A kind of group intuition then develops, a higher level of order appears, and a form of wisdom emerges. The result of the group's effort far exceeds the sum of what each individual is potentially capable of contributing and what we are used to experiencing.

Ref F - ARTICLE
"From opposition to non-violence":
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Opposition%20EN.htm].
Opposition engenders: opposition, or submission… but only temporarily.
In fact, it is already in the way of thinking that underlies an oppositional attitude that we bias our objectives. For by opposing, we slow down, and sometimes even prevent ourselves from achieving our goals. Our attitude will lead to behaviours which, very often, cannot be accepted by the other party. For opposition is a serious obstacle to dialogue and negotiation. In the worst-case scenario, it can cut off communication and give way to strategies of violence.

Opposition takes place within the register of the balance of power.
Non-violence, in its essence, does not oppose people. It simply does not cooperate with whatever causes the problem.

The process of non-violence consists of saying: 'I do not agree with you, so I cannot cooperate with your actions, and I will do everything possible to achieve what I am seeking, but I will never cause you the slightest harm in order to do so: I will do nothing that involves contempt, destruction, slander, etc., and I accept whatever consequences you decide to inflict me, including the possibility of achieving nothing, losing my freedom, or even losing my life. I will simply maintain my position until we can talk about it and find a solution that suits us both."

Ref G – ARTICLE
"Managing thoughts – Managing emotions" *(in French):*
[https://sechangersoi.be/4Articles/Gestionpenseesetemotions.htm].
Basically, all our thoughts, regardless of their origin, arise automatically, without us having any control over the process. Apart from reasoning, we can learn to direct our thoughts towards certain contents, or sometimes manage to distance ourselves from certain contents, but rarely more than that.
And in situations of stress, major concern, or in the presence of some strong emotions, it is almost impossible to maintain control of the situation.
Thoughts repeat themselves, whirl, and bring us away into ruminations. They start to spin out of control, run on empty, and lead us into mazes from which we find it extremely difficult to escape. They lead us to

construct mental scenarios – most often unrealistic ones – but in which we firmly believe, to the point where we sometimes feel compelled to verify them, as they influence our emotions and behaviours to such an extent that we act in a way that brings them to fruition. And the more time passes, the more it hurts us, and the more these scenarios end up repeating themselves, and we then really have to fight to keep our heads above water. All of this feeds our negative emotions, even to the point of making them unmanageable. It causes us suffering, pollutes our daily lives, reduces our freedom of choice, can push us to do things we later regret, or even ends up manifesting itself in the body in the form of symptoms that are said to be psychosomatic.

The article was referenced in the book, in the section about techniques, in order to learn, in our daily lives, to observe our thoughts and emotions without translating them into actions. Many forms of meditation lead to this, as do certain other psychological techniques, such as those mentioned on the page:
[https://sechangersoi.be/4Articles/Gestionpenseesetemotionspage14.htm]
including EMDR:
[https://sechangersoi.be/4Articles/Gestionpenseesetemotionspage16.htm#EMDR]
and EFT: [https://sechangersoi.be/4Articles/Gestionpenseesetemotionspage16.htm#EFT],
which are two well-known energy psychology techniques. EMDR is generally used to treat psychological trauma, whilst EFT has a much broader scope, helping to manage stress, emotions and thoughts, as well as certain symptoms and pain.

Ref H – ARTICLE
"From Fear to Peace"
This article is a presentation of Thierry Janssen's book *"Vivre en paix" (*Living in Peace), (2014), cited above in the references, which reflects certain aspects of it:
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Fromfeartopeace.htm].
The anger underlying violence – regardless of the scale on which it is perpetrated – is generated by the fear one have of the perpetrators of violence. Fear of violence is therefore capable of engendering violence that is just as destructive and murderous as the violence it seeks to combat. It is much more important to address fears if we want to defuse violence. Both our own fears, even if we didn't put them in action, as those of the persons who have already perpetrated them, in order to stop feeding a perpetual vicious circle, terribly murderous.

Ref I - ARTICLE
"The qualities of our defects":
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Qualitiesofdefects.htm].
Knowing and accepting our dark shadow, and in a way, the effects of the past on our present character, also means accepting ourselves as we are without trying to hide our faults. Without this acceptance, we will remain subject to the judgement of others and will not be able to allow our true positive tendencies to flourish.
It is at the heart of our flaws that the most beautiful part of our humanity lies. For they can be the source of our finest qualities.
Rather than fighting or hiding them, knowing and recognising them allows us to discover the qualities that lie hidden just behind them and helps us to grow and find fulfilment.
The benefit is not so much the discovery of the quality as the change in perspective, both on ourselves and on others, allowing us to discern the humanity in others behind their weaknesses.

Ref J - ARTICLE
***"Your thinking is not you"**:*
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Yourthinkingisnotyou.htm].
Taking a step aside and learning to observe our thoughts without identifying with them allows us to create much greater freedom of thought, to make room for humility and also for caution regarding our own opinions, knowledge and beliefs. Above all, it allows us to access new dimensions of ourselves and have a very different impact on our lives.

Ref K - ARTICLE
"Dispenza – You Are the Placebo" (2014):
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Youaretheplacebo.htm]
This article presents Joe Dispenza's book "You Are the Placebo".
We are the product of our thoughts. We can heal our problems, ailments and illnesses by transforming the content of our thoughts.

Joe Dispenza discusses topics such as visualisation, meditation, the law of attraction, and the applications of quantum physics in personal evolution, and he does so through the lens of neuroscience. He talks about the plasticity of the brain, our ability to create or remove neural connections, our ability to activate or deactivate our genes, and the important interaction between our cells, our body, and our thoughts and emotions. Most importantly, he discusses the importance of better managing these thoughts and emotions in order to transform both our mind and our health. His book is full of examples, studies and experiments that illustrate his theories. In this book, he puts forward the idea that we can achieve health through our willpower and ability to direct our thoughts and emotions by changing our beliefs, and use this in the same way we use a placebo.

Ref L - TALE
"The Story of the Hummingbird"
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/5EN-Tales/Hummingbird.htm]
Doing our part means stopping being complacent, and also stopping waiting for others to get involved, and focusing on our own steps, however small they may be.
We are responsible for what we do, and also for what we omit to do.

Ref M - ARTICLE
"Our influence"
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Influence-EN.htm]
This article is reproduced almost in its entirety in the last part of the book: *"Influencing factors of change"*, and in particular in the chapter: *"Catalysts of a different kind"*.
The influence we have on others when we undergo profound inner change goes far beyond our immediate circle.

When awareness of the pitfalls of a society driven by money, power and profit sets in, along with the will to distance oneself from these abuses; a fervent desire to lead those around us, and even beyond, down the same path, often becomes the main objective. Many people then discover their missionary calling, taking small steps forward and trying to push those around them to take big steps. And this, more often than not, provokes the opposite of the desired effect, namely: resistance.
But while it is not easy to convince others, we can still bring about change around us in another way, because a psychological strength and the radiance or charisma which results from the personal evolution can influence in another way.
This influence can be considered from different perspectives, as detailed in the article:

Collective intelligence, mirror neurons, epigenetics, the contagion of altruism, morphogenetic fields, self-contagion, the transmission of our thoughts and emotions, and the power of minorities.
Thus, regardless of the level of consciousness and evolution we are working on: citizen, consumer, communication, relationships, behaviours, thoughts, emotions, spirituality; we influence others in the same direction.

Ref N - ARTICLE
"From the hundredth monkey to the morphic fields – from the legend to the scientific hypothesis":
[https://sechangersoi.be/EN/4EN-Articles/Sheldrake%20EN.htm]
Rupert Sheldrake, a British biologist, has developed a whole theory on morphogenetic fields. His theory is based on the observation in biology that when a community learns a new skill, and once that skill has been mastered by a sufficient number of members of that community, it automatically becomes assimilated by all members of that community, but also by all members of communities of the same species, even in the absence of any material communication between these communities. And this applies equally to human beings.

While we tend to think that our memory is located in our brain, that our genes are responsible for hereditary traits, and that our thoughts are solely the result of chemical and electrical phenomena occurring in the brain, Sheldrake postulates otherwise.
The changes we introduce in our lives at an individual level would thus have an impact on those around us, and even further afield, even if we do not show or communicate them.

NOTES

1 This book is published exclusively in digital format (PDF, ebook, HTML) and is **FREE.**

It can therefore be read on a PC, tablet, e-reader, or smartphone. For the latter, there are excellent (free) apps that enable you to read the ePub in a truly comfortable way, with the same quality as on an e-reader, or even better, and to be able to read anywhere.

Note: However, some apps do not support certain formats of the book (interactivity, colours, margins, frames, etc.). Therefore, for smartphones or tablets (with Android), I particularly recommend the high-performance app (free version) that provides the most faithful rendering of the formats in the book: "Moon + Reader". It is possible to obtain it without being connected to a GAFAM, via the app's APK file, which can be downloaded from the internet.

To remain consistent with the content of the book and for environmental reasons, there are currently no plans to publish a paper version. If you have access to one of the digital formats, please avoid printing it. Otherwise, if possible, please only print the chapters that you are sure you will read.

2 This book has been edited to be as interactive as possible.

To begin with, the table of contents is interactive, extremely detailed, and the titles are as explicit as possible. This means you are free to read the book in any order you choose, although following the chronological order will give you a better understanding of the reasoning behind its writing.

It is probably best to read it on a connected device so that you can open tabs in your browser for all the links provided, allowing you to bookmark the pages and look at them later.

3 Next, regarding the presentation of sources and references, I have chosen to think outside the box:

- **Links without cookies:** All sources and references link to a website. Unless I am mistaken, none of the sites mentioned require cookies to be accepted in order to access them, or at the very least, it is still possible to read the text without accepting cookies, despite the presence of a pop-up window that hides part of the text. By denying access to casual readers by requiring them to accept cookies or subscribe, some media outlets are creating negative publicity for themselves. This is especially true since they do not offer the option of paying per visit for pages that are only visited occasionally.
- **Selection of the best references:** The "references" that I strongly recommend consulting will be listed at the end of the book, ranked according to the order of interest I attribute to them and briefly presented. It is therefore preferable, unless you have insatiable curiosity, great motivation and a lot of time available, not to visit them directly. They are mentioned by the abbreviation [see Ref] followed by the reference number corresponding to the ranking I have given them, and refer to the reference at the end of the book.
- **Other sources:** All other sources can be found both as hyperlinks and in the endnotes. As such, for a printed version, the endnotes are the only way to access the internet addresses.
- **Origin and date of sources**: A large part of the sources are Belgian, as this is my country of origin and where I get my information. However, either the information I refer to is universal or international, or, if it is specific to Belgium, the aim is rather to give an order of magnitude or a trend that can be found in most Western countries. And even if the sources and references given are dated, the values they propose remain entirely valid as examples. The content of the book is intended for anyone interested in the topics discussed, regardless of their location. It is written from a European or Western perspective, even if the view is often offbeat.

4 For videos in other languages available on YouTube, it is also possible in most cases to obtain automatic subtitles in English or any other language. To activate this option: first click on the

second icon at the bottom right of the video, which is a white rectangle, and activate the subtitles. Then click on the third icon in the options, which is a gear/flower. Select "subtitles", scroll down to the bottom of the list, and select "translate automatically". Scroll down the list to the letter E and select "English" or any other language.

As the translation is automatic, there may be a few errors. Some words may be completely inappropriate, but overall, the translation is generally of fairly good quality.

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