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THE WORLD OF TOMORROW IN THE LIGHT OF SPIRITISM

CERCLE SPIRITE
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Kardec*
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SUMMARY

FOREWORD

Chapter 1: PREAMBLE

Progress is always possible
Human rights according to spiritism
Spiritism is not a religion
The spiritist approach to God and reincarnation
From religion to atheism
The rise of fundamentalism

Chapter 2: THE MAJOR PROBLEMS OF SOCIETIES

The question of euthanasia
Suicide
Justice and punishment
Sexuality, homosexuality, transsexuality
Racism, xenophobia, sexism
Abortion - voluntary termination of pregnancy
Disabilities and birth diseases
Education
Organ donations
Live guinea pigs used in medicine
Cloning and genetic manipulation
Medically assisted procreation
Surrogation
Freezing embryos
Technicity
Top-level sport
Drug

Chapter 3: THE DIFFERENT POLITICAL REGIMES

Principles and generalities
The democratic ideal, emergence and history
The different types of democracy

Chapter. 4: COLONISATION AND DECOLONISATION

The context of decolonisation
The difficulty of political and economic transitions

Chapter 5: THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION (UNO)

Chapter 6: ECONOMIC QUESTIONS

Economics, an inexact science
The birth of capitalism
Philosophers of the economy

The place of money
Globalisation
Ecology
What would harmonious globalisation look like?
Avenues for the future
Conclusion

Chapter 7: ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

Global warming
Spiritual influence
The role of the collective unconscious
Human activities
Shale gas
GMOs
The problem of a green Africa
Citizen awareness

Chapter 8: TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY FOR TOMORROW

Old and new utopias
Democracy and how it works
From capitalism to socialism
Building a social Europe
Reflections on participatory democracy
The role of trade unions
Citizen think groups
The associations
The boycott

Chapter 9: THE PLURALITY OF WORLDS

The great spiritist principles
The ufo phenomenon
Worlds solidarity
From world to world
Extra-terrestrial models
The diversity of other worlds
What the earth can become

Chapter 10: TOWARDS A SOCIETY OF PLANETARY PEACE

Escape from violence
Towards disarmament
From a religious perspective
The peaceful spiritism of Jaurès
Associative humanist struggles
Peace, a spiritist priority

FOREWORD

Spiritism, a science and philosophy of being, born from contact with disembodied spirits and initially codified by Allan Kardec, developed in a few regions of the world, and more particularly in Brazil. However, it continued to exist in France throughout the 20th century but in a more irregular manner. Its redeployment since the 1980s owes much to our association *Cercle spirite Allan Kardec*, created in 1977.

In this historical development of more than 150 years (we celebrated the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Allan Kardec's death on 30 and 31 March 2019 at a major forum in Nancy), Spiritism has been the subject of scientific experiments, philosophical reflections, including ethical and moral considerations regarding the application of the idea. More concretely, in Brazil, the spiritist groups came to the rescue of insufficient or non-existent social structures, creating centres for after-school care, medical and psychiatric assistance, orphanages, and also helping the needy with soup kitchens and other food distributions. Thus, in an organised way, charitable support was and still is the social mark of Brazilian spiritism. In this way, the Brazilian Spiritists put into practice what Allan Kardec had already advocated, albeit on a more limited scale in 19th century France, which he had recorded in his notes, published in the book "*Œuvres posthumes*" (*Posthumous works*).

Latin American spiritualists have thus looked for the moral application of Kardec's teaching, essentially in the field of charitable actions, and some of them, such as Argentine Manuel Porteiro, in a broader field of reflection on the human condition and on the flaws of the political and economic systems that produce the worst inequalities. Thus, starting from the master work of Allan Kardec, and in particular from the *Book of Spirits*, several Spiritist intellectuals, especially Latin Americans, tried to transpose or adapt Spiritist morality into a more universal ethic that no longer only questions individual consciousness, but collective reflection on the possibility of envisaging other models of society. In particular, José Marty (1853-1895), who fought for the independence of Cuba, and the reformist president Francisco Madero in Mexico (presidency from 1911 to 1913), tried to combine their political responsibilities with their spiritist affiliation.

We should also mention the unique experience in France of the industrialist Jean-Baptiste Godin, who, a disciple of Charles Fourier and a fervent follower of spiritism, created his "Familistère" de Guise in the Aisne region, a sort of cooperative where everything was organised in terms of housing, health insurance, retirement, etc. The principle was the redistribution of industrial wealth to the workers. This experiment, initiated by Godin in 1859, ended in 1968.

Concerning social actions in France, we note this text from the Fédération Spirite Lyonnaise:

"The activities of the Federation were not limited to the practice of spiritism. Henri Sausse, considering that Spiritism "is a work of moral and material charity and that it is good that this be confirmed by actions", proposed the creation of a Caisse de Secours Mutuel in 1888. This fund, which was fed by the proceeds of conferences and private donations, was intended to help the elderly and the needy by paying them a pension. In 1904, at the suggestion of two mediums of the fraternal society, a spiritist nursery was opened for the children of workers.

Henri Sausse wrote a brochure entitled "Hope and Courage", the federation published 10,000 brochures which were distributed free of charge to families who

had lost a child, this brochure explained the philosophical principles and scientific bases of spiritism.

In our Western circles, and more particularly in France, political and social issues were little discussed, as they were not the subject of major debates or consultations, at a time when the fundamental principles still had to be consolidated, in particular with the scientific experiments carried out until the 1920s.

On the other hand, these questions have been widely addressed in our Cercle Spirite since its creation (first experiences in 1974 and declaration as an association in 1977), as a philosophical extension of a moral, or rather an ethical, already evoked in the work of Allan Kardec, but which deserved further development, as well as an updating due to the evolution of societies since the Second Empire. We have thus carried out numerous reflections, and asked many questions to the spirits who have not been stingy with their answers, indicating to us, not always ready-made solutions, but directions and paths to be explored, which are in line with the fundamental principles of Spiritism.

The aim of the present work is therefore to give an account of more than forty-five years of human reflections and messages from spirits, in an attempt at synthesis which will never be perfect or complete, but which aims to be sufficiently representative of a social spiritism which asks the right questions of a humanity which must grow, by bringing elements of answer, sometimes precise ones concerning societal questions, sometimes more abstract ones concerning the economic and political complexities for the whole planet.

In this thesis or essay, which has become a book, we have tried not to reason too much from Franco-French or even European data, but to broaden our reflection to the whole of the planet's problems, which in fact is amply shown by the messages from beyond, which on these subjects indicate the concerns of the Spirits about problems that are more planetary than strictly limited to our country.

We have tried, not to advocate this or that political or economic programme, but to define a project of society with human, political and economic implications, including the spiritual and divine dimension, the reincarnationist dimension, the evolutionary dimension which also includes extra-terrestrial realities of higher worlds, models of what the Earth may eventually become.

We therefore propose essential lines of thought in which we have integrated the great spiritist principles. Some of our theses are in line with existing proposals, be it in ethics committees, among environmentalists or among certain politicians and economists; but in reality, what makes us different is that our spiritist reflections integrate divine transcendence, evolutionary reincarnation and the plurality of worlds in an infinite universe. It is possible that some of our theses are in perfect correlation with projects and studies from human, political, trade union, social and associative groups. In all cases, it is a humanist principle of sharing and love that remains the driving force behind the proposals made. For our part, we are not following this or that organisation, but if we join forces with some of them, it will simply mean that the universal principles of equality, justice and freedom are inscribed in the depth of sincere hearts from the most atheistic to the most religious ones. There is therefore a universal morality felt by all the noblest souls. And it is through the gathering of all these good wills that love will triumph, and on that day, Spiritism will become very present and recognised by its natural relationship to the other world. We are not there yet, and before arriving at this new world, we will have to go through evolutionary stages in the organisation of our societies. It is therefore on these

stages that we will discuss in the chapters that follow, hoping to have touched on some essential points that can serve as food for thought for each and every one of us, for a better collective participation in the future and the safeguarding of our *common home**.

**Formula used by Pope Francis in his 2015 encyclical Laudato si'*

Chapter 1

PREAMBLE

PROGRESS IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE

Our most pessimistic contemporaries often say that the progress of humanity is minimal, or even nil on the scale of a few centuries; this is their way of saying that morally we are no different from our ancestors in terms of war, torture, slavery, exploitation, dictatorships and so on. Having said that, should we give in to resignation and despair? Is there not extraordinary progress to be highlighted, first and foremost in the areas of health, hygiene, discoveries and technologies that enable the human condition to be improved? And if we want to talk about ethics, we must also mention the democratic achievements and the progress made on societal issues, even if misfortunes are still perpetuated against a backdrop of crises.

On the scale of human history, there has been a considerable acceleration over the last fifty years, at least in our Western countries, on subjects such as equal rights, individual freedoms, the women's condition and the evolution of morals. If at the same time one must point out a moral immobility in the lack of will to reform economic and financial structures, the fact remains that societal issues have been the subject of significant progress in a few decades. This does not address the fundamental problems posed by a financial system that generates crises. Some will say that societal issues, such as gay marriage, are just gimmicks that temporarily hide the fundamental problems. But if we can make progress on these subjects, it is at least a proof that mentalities are not frozen, and we can then hope for a maturity that will allow us to tackle the tougher and more complex problems concerning the metamorphosis of our systems.

On the ground of democratic progress in France, it was from the French Revolution onwards that a change of direction took place, even if it then took a century of upheavals (revolutions, restorations, empires) to establish republics and advance democracy.

From the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (1789), from the *American Declaration of Independence* (1776) and other democratic advances in various countries, our Western world had gradually turned its back on monarchies and theocracies. The right to vote became universal male suffrage, and later on it was granted to women. It should be noted that women had the right to suffrage as early as 1893 in New Zealand, 1902 in Australia, 1919 in the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, not to mention a few other territories which, as early as the 18th century, recognised this right, even temporarily, such as New Jersey from 1776 to 1807 or Quebec from 1791 to 1849. In France, however, we had to wait until the Liberation with the ordinance of 5 October 1944.

Then, in the United States, it was the abolition of slavery obtained by Abraham Lincoln, following a bloody Secession War, a declaration which only really found its

full dimension a century later, with the fight of Martin Luther King, leading to the civil rights granted to blacks (1964).

All of this represents a long history of continuous struggles against oppression and discrimination, struggles that are never over (if we think, for example, of the death penalty in the United States) and whose results are hardly exportable, since it is true that we make little use of the successful models that exist in other countries. And if it took us almost a century to stabilise a real democracy in France, we cannot expect to see a radical transformation of some traditional systems that would lead to democracy overnight. In the case of the Arab revolutions, for example, it would have been naive to believe in the immediate advent of democracies modelled on our Western models. It needs time for various controversies and resistances to take place, it is necessary to acquire maturity against cultural and religious influences that present certain dangers, but this is the price that societies pay to advance. There is no miracle solution to move immediately from despotism to democracy.

Societal advances

The progresses noted are those which have accompanied development and modernity, based on philosophical reflections and ethical questions concerning education, equal rights, democratic life or scientific progress. Thus, in France, the rights of the citizen were declared in 1789; thus, public education for all came into being in 1881; thus, women gradually gained access to the life of the city, etc. When we talk about human evolution, we sometimes think that nothing is moving forward and that human egoism will always prevent a path to peace, but the developments in the organisation of societies are there to show us that everything is still possible, based on struggles in different directions.

With regard to scientific progress, there is still a need to legislate on euthanasia and genetic engineering, in order to try to find the right modalities for an appropriate ethic. In the field of morals, significant progress has been made over the past fifty years: the legalisation of divorce, contraception, professional equality between the sexes, equality of spouses in the management of property, etc. And from the 1970s onwards, many new laws have been introduced. And from the 1970s onwards, new issues were tackled: abortion with Simone Veil, medically assisted procreation, and beyond science, today's issues concerning homosexuality, transsexuality, marriage for all and adoption. At the same time, we note that these societal issues have been the subject of advanced legislation in several European and American countries, whereas France has been procrastinating for years on many points, no longer being a model of progress but rather an island of conservative resistance. Have the other countries moved too quickly without having sufficiently addressed the ethical issues? It would seem not, since for gay marriage or adoption, for example, there are hardly any difficulties arising from the new legislation that has become the norm in certain countries.

We have studied all these subjects from a Spiritist point of view, both from questions put to the Spirits and from our own reflections which followed. The overall conclusion is that it is always love that must triumph, whatever the modalities and forms, and that the real problems posed are those of a cultural environment, with its habits and customs often impregnated with religious traditions. It is also a question for us of considering spiritist principles: for example, the process of incarnation when it comes to abortion or genetic engineering. When we know that incarnation takes place at the moment of conception, this is a fact to be taken into account. When we know how difficult it is for a Spirit to reincarnate by finding a certain prison of flesh,

this is another primordial element in terms of accompanying this return in the state of mind of parents who can be in loving and reassuring telepathy with him. We are no longer dealing with moralising precepts or fixed laws dictated by religious dogmas, but with a study of the laws and principles taught by the beyond, and with an ethical reflection based on these universal realities.

When we talk about bioethics, for example, as Spiritists we bring this fundamental knowledge that the spirit pre-exists physical life, that it merges and unfolds through its vital principle in its new life; it is then by its very presence and pre-existence the very principle of life. And it is on the basis of these data that we can reflect on everything that concerns genetic manipulation, cloning, in vitro fertilisation, etc.

A step towards freedom

When many of our fellow citizens despair of everything and think that the Earth will always be a valley of tears where we will never live in peace and harmony, it is fatalistic pessimism that takes over, as if there were no longer any paths to explore to emancipate humanity. And yet, progress has existed and does exist, fragile no doubt, weakened in times of crisis, but whatever the Cassandras say, a look at recent history shows that many battles have had their results: Let's mention again Martin Luther King and the obtaining of civil rights in 1964, Gandhi's fight, which is certainly unfinished but remains the example of non-violent resistance, Nelson Mandela and the end of apartheid... Let's also think of the Latin American countries which, at the turn of the 21st century, had more or less freed themselves from a North American political domination, which had supported, and even set up, the past dictatorships. We must certainly put into perspective this reality, which has been promising over the last two decades, but which is experiencing the current reversal of fortune that we know, particularly in Brazil, and which we hope is temporary.

How many other examples could we mention to show that although evolution remains fluid and uncertain, it does exist in certain places, through victories that will probably never be sufficient, but which indicate the direction of possible progress that must be emphasised when it exists. On the other hand, we can highlight all the misery in the world, all the hotbeds of war, and say that nothing is changing. This would mean forgetting all the progress achieved through struggles and which show, here and there, the example of what can be achieved through a balance of power.

In other times, who would have believed in the fall of the Soviet empire, the end of apartheid, and more recently the uprising of the Arab countries? The most pessimistic will tell you: "What's the point... what does it all lead to if not to new conflicts...". They say this because they would like to naively believe in an immediate and miraculous resolution of all the problems, forgetting that no transformation can be made with a wave of a magic wand, that it takes time for metamorphoses, time for the maturity of peoples, all things that cannot happen overnight in the complexity of the weight of history, in its cultural, religious, colonial and other influences.

The fight for freedom in a world of solidarity is a long journey that is won in successive stages through serious crises that must be overcome. This is the whole history of our humanity, which is seeking its direction, still dependent on its errors and contradictions.

As Spiritists we are accustomed to saying that we are still inhabitants of an inferior planet, which in itself is not a revelation, except to say that there are superior and harmonious worlds in the Universe, and that the destiny of the Earth is to become in its turn a world of brotherhood and peace. This is the meaning of evolution as it was already defined in *The Book of Spirits*. It is an eminently Kardecist and Spiritist

notion, and it is at the same time a hope that still seems distant, unable to satisfy the most pessimistic among us. The great idea will not be that of naïve predictions which would have no meaning, but rather that of making the conscience of a majority of humans grow, who will one day be capable, through the democratic advances they will have acquired, of leading the indispensable struggles to eradicate all the scourges which threaten them.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM

The status of women

All men are free and equal in law, which is what the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* claimed; it was also a Spiritist principle enacted in the chapter *Moral Laws* of the *Book of Spirits*, in the paragraph *Law of Equality*, where we note the following: "*The sexes exist only by virtue of the physical organisation: since spirits can take one and the other, there is no difference between them in this respect and consequently they must enjoy the same rights.*" This was a significant correction of the 1789 declaration, which left out half of the population, as women were not promoted to the rank of citizenship; this was what Olympe de Gouges wanted to correct in 1791, when she wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizens*, a text that was rejected by the Assembly. Thus, in 1793, one of those who demanded strict equality of civil and civic rights for the recognition of a female identity were guillotined; it was not good then for women to claim to be involved in a political sphere reserved for men.

As detailed in the previous chapter, it was towards the end of the 19th^e century (sometimes slightly earlier) that women's right to vote was put into practice in a few nations such as New Zealand, Australia, Lower Canada (from 1791 to 1849) and some states in the United States. These advances, which were still not very stable, became a reality, especially at the beginning of the 20th century, with a bad point for France, which did not achieve it until late in 1944, even though France, the country of the rights of man and the citizen, had omitted to integrate the participation of women in the life of the city.

Even if Allan Kardec, in his *law of equality*, had not specifically addressed this question of citizenship, it was nevertheless said: "*Human law, in order to be equitable, must consecrate the equality of rights between man and woman; any privilege granted to one or the other is contrary to justice. The emancipation of woman follows the progress of civilisation, her enslavement goes with barbarism (...)*". This refers to *rights* and *privileges*, which implicitly indicates that it is a question of all rights, including the right to vote. And if *the emancipation of women follows the progress of civilisation*, this is a serious observation which is still valid today throughout the world, because even after much progress in the most developed countries, a certain number of inequalities between men and women persist concerning work, its conditions, its remuneration and its access to the best positions. And in the poorest or developing countries, inequalities remain flagrant, even unbearable when they amount to forms of submission or slavery.

From this point of view, Spiritist thought has always been ahead of its time, and even today, this is one of the current issues on which Spiritism calls for evolutions towards

equality. In Spiritist circles, the example is set since there is no difference in responsibilities between women and men.

Social inequalities

If there are these obvious historical and current contrasts concerning the status of women, there have also been power relationships since the dawn of humanity, with dominators and dominated, where the law of the strongest has always been the rule until the weakest rebelled. And this is how slaves, from Spartacus to Toussaint Louverture, from rebellion to revolution, have fought the battles for freedom that are inherent to human societies in all periods. Allan Kardec also asked the question in his *Book of Spirits*: "Is social inequality a law of nature?", a question that was even more crucial in his time than it is today, since, let us remember, in the middle of the 19th century, some people still affirmed the existence of inferior peoples, among those natives of other lands who had to be colonised, civilised and christianised. And to this question about social inequality, the answer was: "*No, it is the work of man, not of God*", and about its eventual disappearance: "*This inequality will disappear together with the predominance of pride and egoism, and only the inequality of merit will remain. The day will come when the members of the great family of God's children will no longer regard each other as of more or less pure blood; it is only the spirit that is more or less pure, and this does not depend on social position.*"

For humans with common sense, this answer may be obvious today, but it is far from being universally accepted, given the discriminatory contempt, racism and xenophobia that exist in all parts of the world, not to mention certain ancestral cultural traditions that are based on modes of domination and oppression. It is in this respect that there is no natural law that would indicate differences and inequalities are inscribed in creation. As incarnated spirits, our only the evolutionary disparities are the result of our past life paths. There are therefore evolutionary differences on the intellectual and moral levels, but these do not provide any additional rights or privileges.

Based on this, the most evolved humans have the responsibility, and the duty to participate in the transformation of societies in a more just and egalitarian direction.

These are the great Spiritist principles that have been laid down since the publication of the *Book of Spirits* in 1857, principles of common sense that have long been accepted by most philosophers and intellectuals. And yet, this common sense has always been lacking in the organisation of societies, where powers are too often annexed by egotistical and proud dominators, mostly male, who flout human rights to the point of establishing dictatorships.

Human rights

Today's societies are increasingly incorporating a move towards gender equality, at least in the more developed countries. But this is where, as everything is interdependent and interconnected, another question arises: human rights have progressed in parallel with democratic advances, which themselves have emerged with the development of industry, the economy and consumption; would this be satisfactory? Obviously not, because it would lead one to believe that Western culture in general is superior to others. We need to think about the paradox of our world, which is advancing at several speeds, when dictatorial or theocratic countries are not achieving democracy nor evolution of morals, particularly in the imbalance between men and women.

The most widespread thesis is that the former colonising countries are exploiting the Third World and continue to plunder the wealth of the former colonies in a disguised manner, eventually placing their associates in charge of affairs; in particular, the installation of dictators through, what has been called Françafrique. This is probably not the only explanation, but it does justify difficult, if not impossible, economic development in these countries, which, in widespread poverty, also maintain archaic traditions that, seen from our window, may seem aberrant. Most of these countries have not found the means of emancipation either, because they are prisoners of both dictatorial and religious systems, and thus remain economically, democratically and culturally blocked. Everything is thus linked in what has been called the North-South problem, defined by a lack of cooperation and sharing, as if it were necessary to prevent the emancipation of the populations of a Third World whose mineral and oil wealth is still being exploited by our countries without compensation.

In a narrower view, some would say that it is only dictatorships or theocracies that explain this state of affairs, which is quite simplistic and insufficient, forgetting the historical chains that can explain all the disparities and injustices resulting from the domination of the great powers.

Once this is said, the problem remains, or almost so, because the efforts of some are often destroyed by others, and how can democracy emerge where progressive opposition is systematically gagged or even persecuted? This is the problem of much of the African continent, of most of the Middle Eastern countries against a background of oil and other interests, not to mention countries like Burma, Bangladesh, and many others.

And although China has "woken up", as a certain Alain Peyrefitte* predicted, it does not have the characteristics of a democracy, far from it; which does not prevent it, despite this, from becoming the world's leading economic power...

All these disparities question the meaning of human rights, almost everywhere in the world, which according to some spiritualists is still justified by the law of karma, a thesis as ridiculous as those of fundamentalists of all faiths. There are no fatalities but facts, there are the historical consequences of bad relations between humans and between peoples. All of this brings us back once again to what is apparent in Allan Kardec's entire work: the egoism and pride of the human race, factors of all inequalities, in a lack of intellectual and moral evolution. He was indicating that religions would no longer be the right models and that Spiritism, going beyond the religious fact, would likely give a glimpse of a totally new horizon in a different way of thinking. And even if Spiritism has not experienced the deployment he had wished and envisaged, we can nevertheless say today that this perspective is still open, because many human beings from all sides of life are working in different associative fields for freedom, equality and justice, and Spiritists in their own way participate in this. And if the majority of the world's religions are no longer credible, spirituality needs to be represented and be representative of these struggles, led by believers, agnostics or atheists. A spirituality that has its place when it is in direct contact with the real world of today, and even ahead of its time. This is of course the modern and progressive Spiritism, the kind that responds to the founder's phrase: *"The only unshakeable faith is that which can look reason in the face, in all ages of humanity."* Well, we are now in another "age of humanity", one hundred and sixty years later, having gone through two world wars, dictatorships and incessant genocides, and yet hope is still very much there when here and there, humanist struggles have shown that everything is possible, with Martin Luter King, Nelson Mandela and many others more or less known who have advanced human rights in different countries.

SPIRITISM IS NOT A RELIGION

Spiritism has often been considered as a religion, and since its birth with Allan Kardec, the question is still debated in certain Spiritist circles where it is said that Allan Kardec himself had not completely settled the question according to the semantic content that could be given to the word religion. Does religion mean connecting and uniting around an idea or is it mainly a question of beliefs that are opposed to reason? For our part, we have come to the simplest notions, defining the concepts on the basis of their most commonly used content. In religion, the notions of belief and faith are accepted independently of any attempt at logical and reasoned analysis. Thus, for example, in Catholicism, the mystery of the Holy Trinity or the resurrection of Jesus are concepts that appeal to belief insofar as they are and will remain inexplicable, posing a challenge to reason that can only be resolved by faith. Conversely, in the case of Spiritism, the mystery cannot remain without explanation, and it is from a scientific, philosophical and historical approach that new theses have gradually emerged to make intelligible what was obscure. It is particularly through the study of the history of the Church that many religious principles have been deciphered. At different times, dogmas were instituted, often contradicting what was previously accepted, dogmas institutionalised by churchmen and sometimes claimed to be inspired by a divine breath.

The history of the Church is in fact the history of successive dogmas which, most of the time, contradict reason; they then become objects of faith, and are therefore admissible only by faith.

Faith or reason

It is therefore this point that becomes essential in the debate: the religious is dependent on faith, while the philosophical is based on reason. And in this sense, spiritism makes it possible to dissociate itself from belief insofar as some of its principles obey laws that can be described, explained, analysed and even proven, either experimentally or philosophically. However, there will still be a small part that calls on faith, and that is the presupposition that God exists.

A materialist, for example, is based on the premise that God does not exist, and so commits an act of faith, faith in an atheistic certainty that he will then endeavor to demonstrate through science, analysis and reasoning.

In the same way, the spiritualist, and in particular the spiritualist, will set out his own starting point, that of the existence of God; it is then a wager (like Pascal's) that he must then demonstrate. To do this, he will use arguments and reasoning that he considers more convincing than those of the nihilists. These arguments are already amply contained in Allan Kardec's *Le Livre des Esprits*, and they are further strengthened by the fact that the spirits themselves have come to confirm both their survival and the reality of an infinite divine force that creates everything. Obviously, another presupposition is needed here, that of the actual manifestation of spirits, the reality of which has been established through the study of mediumship and the evidence provided.

By this study realized out of Spiritism, first and foremost by Allan Kardec, reveals many powerful arguments. When Allan Kardec, using the responses of the Spirits, defines the attributes of God, both in *The Book of Spirits* and in *Genesis according to*

Spiritism, he takes up certain principles contained in the Gospels and makes them explicit, no longer in an act of faith, but with philosophical arguments that are an extension of the statements made by the Spirits through mediums. It is then that he can distance himself from the religious fact, while at the same time confirming certain aspects of a well-understood Christian morality and refuting certain dogmas. It is in this way that the mysteries of religion are elucidated, such as the resurrection of Christ, which is no longer a miracle that contradicts reason, but the ghostly and tangible manifestation of the spirit of Jesus, a phenomenon that has become understandable on the basis of spiritist observations of materialized apparitions and ectoplasmic mediumship.

Another mystery is that this figure, considered to be a prophet or Messiah, was the incarnation of God made man, a concept endorsed at the Council of Nicaea in 325 (consubstantiality between father and son) and a little later with the adoption of the Holy Trinity at the First Council of Constantinople (381), including the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The spiritist study of this point has led to the more logical conclusion that a highly evolved Spirit, close to the perfection of a pure spirit, incarnated and brought a message of divine essence to the people of his time, a message that has nevertheless endured through the centuries because it conveys an essential idea: love of neighbour. This conclusion, confirmed by other entities as well, has made it possible to provide a logical explanation in line with reason, preserving the exceptional nature of a prophet without attributing to him the character of divinity that was granted to him by the principle of the Holy Trinity.

Theology and dogma

Many other dogmas have been decreed over the centuries, constituting a body of doctrine or a theology that no longer has the character of philosophy, insofar as many of the principles it contains depend on blind belief, what some call the faith of the coalman, a faith that allows one to believe in realities that are in themselves impossible. Where understanding is no longer possible, an act of faith is made that dispenses with logical explanations that cannot be found.

Over the last two thousand years, the Church has instituted a number of dogmas, such as *the Immaculate Conception*, which states that "the conception of the Virgin Mary in her mother's womb was not marked by the stain of original sin". This was ratified by Pope Pius IX in 1854. This dogma should not be confused with that of *Mary's virginity*, already indicated in the Gospels and accepted by the majority of the Fathers of the Church. There is also *perpetual virginity* (Mary remaining a virgin after the birth of Jesus), proclaimed at the Second Council of Constantinople in 553.

The Church has also instituted sacraments to meet social needs such as marriage, and more spiritual needs such as baptism, the Eucharist, extreme unction and the forgiveness of sins through confession. If this is indeed theology, i.e. principles instituted by men of the Church, it is also undoubtedly proof that human beings have a need for spirituality. Until now, this need has been satisfied by belief, dogma and ritual. This may be enough for some people, but it leaves others frustrated. Spiritism has had the virtue of explaining the incomprehensible, bringing in other hitherto ill-defined notions such as the manifestation of spirits and their reincarnation in an evolutionary continuum. Reincarnation was a religious principle in several pre-Christian cultures, and was definitively abrogated in 553 (Council of Constantinople) when the pre-existence of the soul and the belief in reincarnation according to Origen (185-253) was condemned.

The belief in successive lives has been a particular feature of the Eastern traditions of Brahmanism and later Buddhism and Hinduism. Here again, even if the principle itself is confirmed by spiritism, it moves away from simplistic beliefs towards a more logical explanation that moves us away from the caricatured notions of punitive karma or metempsychosis.

Is spiritism a continuation of Christianity?

It was from a moral point of view in particular that Allan Kardec linked together three successive revelations in time: that of Moses indicating a moral code in his commandments, the word of Jesus completing that of Moses, and finally the spiritist revelation which brings all the light from the manifestation of the beyond. This principle of spiritual continuity applies to a specifically Judeo-Christian history that also includes the philosophical influence of Greece. This principle, known as third revelation, should not, however, be reduced to the religious, and emphasise one religion more than another. All the world's religions, while they have had their reasons for existing and their necessity from a spiritual point of view, also have (or have had) major flaws, the flaws of human nature leading to domination, war, persecution or inquisition. In our view, therefore, there is no religious tradition that is superior to another, unless we look at it from a very specific point of view: we could say, for example, that today the orientations of the current Pope are much more progressive than those of the American pseudo-Protestant preachers (Evangelicals, Adventists, Pentecostals and others).

In the case of religions that do not belong to our Western culture, mainly Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, it is more difficult for us to judge, given the cultural differences that make our criteria for appreciation different. However, there should be universal data that erase differences. And one of these factors still poses a real problem: the idea of separation between religious practice and the temporal organisation of societies, the famous question of secularism. This question is not raised in any of the great founding texts of religions, and it is even these writings that would distance us from secularism, except at this precise point in the Gospel where Jesus replies to the Pharisees: *"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."*

Spiritists, for their part, made their contribution to this necessary separation between religion and politics, when some of them joined the "Ligue de l'enseignement", campaigning for a secular, non-denominational, free and compulsory school. These were the Pierre-Gaétan Leymarie, Camille Flammarion, Léon Denis, Emmanuel Vauchez and a few others who, following in the footsteps of the educationalist Hippolyte Rivail who became Allan Kardec, pursued the great ideals inherited from the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution, to ensure that the social organisation of public education was resolutely dissociated from religion. In this sense, we can say that Spiritism, already detached from religion as a science and a philosophy, also dissociated itself from it from the point of view of secularism, becoming part of modernity.

Of course, secularism does not mean that spirituality should be forgotten in social life. This principle simply states that in a progressive society, all religions have their legitimate right to express themselves, but none of them should dictate civil law or any of the principles of life in society. That would bring back to the theocracies of the past, or even to the powers of the Inquisition, which are still perpetuated in other countries to the misfortune of their populations, but which will eventually have to

disappear if we really want to envisage progress on Earth, progress that is not religious but spiritual in scope.

THE SPIRITIST APPROACH TO GOD AND REINCARNATION

Today's world is clearly out of step with the values that have underpinned civilisation, whether these values be spiritual, philosophical or humanist, reflected by thinkers who, in their dialectic, have advanced the concepts of democracy, justice and freedom as best they could.

We have now reached a point where the infernal machine of the financial markets is tipping the already unstable balance of a world in turmoil. And since, by definition, a financial market doesn't think (it's not a well-defined entity, it's an elusive and somehow out of control machine), the role and function of regulating it falls to the political class, which is not really on the agenda at the moment. And if politics no longer has its place, putting itself solely at the service of a global system to which no one holds the key any more, a system that is both real and virtual, then we are at an impasse that cannot be resolved by the means currently being used.

How can we think about all this from a spiritist point of view? We could just as easily say from a Christian point of view, or even from a simply humanist point of view, even if he were an atheist. These universal values accepted and advocated by all progressists are more or less the same, appealing to all notions of justice, equality, freedom and emancipation for all human beings without exception.

What we can bring to the table from a spiritist point of view, and what is different, are notions that support the meaning of these universal values and justify them on the basis of spiritual arguments. If the simple argument that all men are free and equal before the law, a position of principle that dates back to the French Revolution, remains an abstract statement that has never really found application. Human nature is such that egoism always wins out in the end. And why is that? Because we live in a situation of global inferiority, in relation to the possible evolution of a humanity that is still in its infancy in terms of intelligence and morality. Through spiritist knowledge, we know that the Earth is an inhabited world among others, a world that reflects the evolutionary level of its inhabitants, and that will have to be transformed into consciousness and love.

Facing reincarnation

If we were to refer to the most pessimistic ideas, which consist in saying that human beings have always had the same faults and will never change, we would be putting ourselves in the nihilistic position of believing in nothing and concluding that life is absurd, even though everything tells us, with regard to the history of humanity, that many things have been able to evolve, albeit in a chaotic way, in the organisation of our societies. And it is perhaps here that we have this decisive element of knowledge of a historical past, a knowledge that should be a driving force to avoid repeating the same mistakes over and over again.

We cannot develop consciousness without knowledge, knowledge of thought, of history, of the civilisations that have gone before us and in which we have more or less played a part. Yes, and this is the innovative element of Spiritism that puts things into perspective: many of us have already lived several lives on Earth, so we have taken part in the history of humanity in our successive past lives, and when we talk

about our ancestors, we are also talking about ourselves. This applies to a part of humanity, linked to its past lives and more or less reunited with its fellow creatures we have already met, so that we can learn to evolve together. Once we know this, the situation is no longer quite the same. We have a share of responsibility, however small it may be personally, in the historical construction of our world: we have participated in one way or another, in different existences, in the life of our planet. We may have been the actors and perpetrators of unworthy things that we condemn today. We have inevitably made many mistakes, even more than mistakes, and for those of us who are more aware than others today, we must bear in mind that in our previous lives we may have committed reprehensible acts that are an integral part of the history of humanity. So, we need to avoid falling back into the mistakes of the past that may have been ours in one way or another, which we can make good with a new awareness. And when we have this awareness, we then adopt a sense of combat against all evils, with a view to increasing the number of combatants, in the certainty that one day, this number will become the majority likely to tip the world towards a new era.

The divine design

Let's turn now to another key argument in human thought, that of a divine force at the origin of our lives. Is it possible to develop thought without God? Yes, to a certain extent, that's what atheist or agnostic philosophers such as Sartre, Camus and others tried to do. It's a very laudable gamble to want to transform an absurd world without God into a humanity that finds its meaning through justice and freedom. It's a totally disinterested gamble that is to the credit of those who, convinced that there is a definitive end after death, put all their energy into building a better world for future generations. And if some people can give meaning to a life without hope of eternity, don't believers have even more reason to hope by thinking of a different humanity, no longer without God, but this time with God? Obviously, this line of reasoning excludes all religious fundamentalism, with its conceptions of a vengeful God whom man has idealised in his own image, according to his own interests.

In spiritism, where God is no longer a theistic (religious) concept but a deistic one (in the sense of Voltaire's God), it is no longer a question of enclosing him in beliefs but of sublimating him in his immeasurable nature, based on a reflection on the laws that govern the Universe and life. And if, as in all other philosophies, spiritism does not provide access to God, it does, however, enable us to partially determine His designs. This is what Allan Kardec did when he approached the notion of the divine from its attributes and from certain universal laws brought to light by spiritist communication.

When we realise that, created by a divine impulse, simple and ignorant at the outset, our spirits have followed the natural law of palingenesis evolution to refine our personalities through successive lives in confrontation with the world, then we have a broader vision of life in its continuity. We come from a God whom we are gradually learning to understand, so that later, in eternity, we can join him when we have become pure spirits. And if we are a long way from this stage, it is today and now that we need to develop a reflection on divine principles, not only for ourselves, but above all for a human society that needs a metamorphosis so that it no longer sinks into its selfish and proud contradictions, the results of which we know have always been of the same type since the dawn of humanity: conflicts of interest, wars, power, appropriation of assets.

Is God the cornerstone that enables human beings to think differently? From a

Spiritist point of view, we think so, insofar as starting from the notion of a God, even an elusive one, but apprehended in a natural, logical and coherent way, we can envisage a different society where the intellectual and moral objectives of life would have found their full meaning, the meaning of a true solidarity that is inscribed in the heart of every human being, or at least that exists in germ, in a potential to be developed in this life or in the next. But there's no need to wait for the next life to move forward, the sooner the better, given that the planet is at a decisive turning point in its evolution, when we measure its technological developments, its disparities in wealth, its demographics and its dangers on various levels - ecological, political, financial or economic.

The fulfilment of a divine plan, seen from the angle of love and solidarity, is the only prospect that will save humanity from its ancestral contradictions. Forgetting God, it is impossible to find a meaning; with God of religion, it is hardly better; but with the humility not to think of ourselves as God, and no longer giving God attributes that are in the image of man, we could envisage a reform of thought capable of transforming the world on the basis of universal values that have always been trampled underfoot by human beings.

In this way, and without any doubt, the notion of the divine, once accepted and understood, will be the means for a new reflection, not only on the metaphysical level, but also and above all for a new approach to the problems of humanity, perceived differently, with heart and with reason, with concern for others, which will bring us back to the prophet's phrase "Love one another", a phrase that was often devoid of meaning for the very people who preached it in churches. So let us find it again in a secularised society, where God will no longer be the property of a caste of believers, but the vital, spiritual and loving energy of all humanity.

FROM RELIGION TO ATHEISM

The nineteenth century saw the emergence of an anti-religious materialist movement, represented in particular by the philosopher Karl Marx, who promoted a new social utopia with revolutionary connotations.

Even before him, in the eighteenth century, the Age of Enlightenment, philosophers offered a mechanistic explanation of the world that opposed religious theories. They included La Mettrie, Diderot, d'Holbach, Helvétius and Cabanis, the latter of whom left us his famous formula: "The brain secretes thought like the liver secretes bile".

Other philosophers followed at the junction of the other century and throughout the 19th century, those who have been described as utopian socialists; rather spiritualist figures on the whole, such as Charles Fourier who, beyond his communal phalanstery, believed in a form of reincarnation, and then Proudhon, Robert Owen, Saint-Simon, Victor Considerant and a few others.

Karl Marx differed radically from the ideological trend of these early socialists, giving in-depth thought to the workings of the economy and finance, putting into perspective the functioning of a society that had entered the industrial age. He produced a very precise analysis of societies in terms of the relationship between capital and labour in his masterpiece "Capital", an enormous thesis that very few people have read in its entirety, except at least George Bernard Shaw, who made a point of it... Even today, his analysis of the workings of the economy and social relationships has not aged a

bit. Jacques Attali provides an insight into this in his book "*Karl Marx ou l'esprit du monde*" (*Karl Marx or the spirit of the world*) (2007), in which he puts Marx in his rightful place, that is to say, in the place of the immense philosopher that he was, preoccupied with discovering how human societies functioned in order to see what their potential for transformation might be.

Marxism and religion

Karl Marx was obviously one of the most atheistic philosophers of his time. The first principle of his materialistic philosophy was to show how religion has always been "the opium of the people", the brake on all evolution of consciousness. Thinking according to divine directives, thinking through fear and guilt, was the surest way for religion (Catholic in France) to exert pressure in the collusion between the clergy and the nobility, to force the common people to obey, on pain of later suffering the wrath of God who would send them to hell if they did not submit to God's representatives on Earth who were the kings and popes, supported by the nobility and the top clergymen.

After the fall of royalty and the nobility, attitudes scarcely changed, more or less reproducing the old patterns of a new class, the bourgeoisie, which tended to be religious, opposed by the proletarian class, which was less and less religious.

From this Marxist influence onwards, many thinkers turned to atheism until the 20th century, believing that the only God was the God of religion, an unjust and immoral God who accepted human hierarchies that led to the exploitation of the weakest. It was in fact the God of the powerful, a God who served as a screen for an inegalitarian capitalist system.

The only God that could be envisaged was the God of religions, ignoring the idea that you can be a deist without religion.

This important principle of Marxism falls like a knife in his definition of a basic atheism that is opposed above all to the only divine notion that he necessarily rejects, that of a rogue Church that has recuperated for its own cause a Christian message that bears little relation to the prophet who transmitted it. Why did Marx limit himself to this over-simplistic conception of a spiritualism over-used by religions? And why were the majority of communists systematically atheists, as well as a number of socialists? Or why did many twentieth century philosophers, such as Sartre and Foucault, settle for an approach limited to the God of a religion? But there were other cases too.

On the philosophers' side...

There are also atheists whose nihilism is not necessarily linked to a rejection of the Church; there is also room for a strictly philosophical atheism in relation to scientific reasoning. In this respect, moreover, the approach will have no more evidential value than for a believer; it will simply be based on an intimate conviction. This atheistic conviction is also a form of belief, the belief in the absence of a divine force combined with the denial of the survival of the spirit after death.

Among the philosophers, there were also those who developed metaphysical ideas in an attempt to understand the world, its possible creator or at least an intelligent and loving force presiding over the destiny of the Universe. Voltaire, a philosopher of the Enlightenment who was not a man of the cloth, was a deist rather than a theist. He said: "*The Universe embarrasses me, and I cannot imagine that this clock exists and has no watchmaker*", echoing Descartes' expression of the "*great watchmaker*". We also remember his famous phrase "*If God didn't exist, we'd have to invent him*". This

is a far cry from any reductive religious conception. And for the anecdote, let us also remember the response of the anarchist Bakunin a few decades later: "*If God existed, he would have to be killed*". Voltaire was thus showing that it is possible to have a certain idea of God, to be a deist, without responding to a religious theology (theistic theology). In the same way, in spiritism, we can speak of a certain idea of God, outside any theological dogma, an idea of a God who does not degrade human beings, who does not subjugate them, but who has given them a natural freedom.

We also realise that the philosophical arguments against the existence of God are often weak and inadequate. This can still be seen today, for example, in our philosopher Michel Onfray, who still relies on a few old, hackneyed arguments dating back to Karl Marx: still the fear that the notion of a God will lead us back to the ambient guilt that is traced back to original sin, still the fear that the notion of a God, even if updated, will still be a brake on human fulfilment and emancipation.

And yet we have a number of counter-examples to show that faith in God is not systematically synonymous with oppression, but on the contrary with justice and freedom. And that was the point of the Latin American Christians who came together in the "Liberation Theology" movement. On the metaphysical level, they were Christians, and on the social level they were Marxists. I'm speaking in the imperfect tense because their time is almost past, even if they still survive in some parts of Brazil. Their social message was mainly about an agrarian revolution to share the land, so that the big landowners would no longer exploit the misery of their peasant workers to the hilt, so that everyone could have a piece of land on which to survive. This is no longer the model of the Russian revolution with its collectivisation, it's simple sharing so that every peasant can live from his work and have his minimum subsistence. How many of these liberation theology priests and peasants were murdered by the henchmen of the big landowners? Several hundred. One of the great leaders of this movement was Archbishop Dom Elder Camara, who died in 1999 at the age of 90.

This is not a change of system, but simply a request to rebalance agricultural property, nothing more. In any case, this example shows that God does not only belong to the Roman Curia or to other denominations, but also to revolutionaries who have understood the essential message of the prophet "Love one another", while referring to the contributions of Karl Marx. We can also see from this example that Marx's preamble, which consists of saying that his philosophy is only valid in terms of its first principle, materialism, is a gross error, but it was undoubtedly an easy solution given that he was attacking the confinement of the mind by religions rather than a possible God.

It is therefore possible to apply all of Marx's social and economic analysis while being religious, deist or spiritualist in one way or another. He saw this as incompatible; on the contrary, we see it as converging when we ask ourselves the right questions about the meaning of life, the meaning of the evolution of the human spirit, and when we take up the great original values of both Christianity and spiritism, which are justice, freedom, equality, in the feeling and love of neighbour. These values are in no way different from those of Marx. Starting from a deist or atheist principle, we can arrive at the same conclusions concerning the organisation of a society and the transformations it requires. This was also understood by Pope John XXIII who, in his encyclicals including *Pacem in Terris*, made a detailed analysis of all existing political systems, seen through the lens of the Christian faith.

After this brief overview of the oppositions between philosophical materialism and religious spiritualism that have marked history, we, as Spirits, can reject these two

conceptions in order to rediscover the notion of God taught by Spirits since the origins of Spiritism.

THE RISE OF FUNDAMENTALISM

After decades of considerable scientific progress, particularly in the West, obscurantist resurgences are invading a debate that has long since ceased. Religious conservatism is back, with its biblical texts, calling into question all the progress we have made in science and consequently in philosophy, particularly since the 19th century.

Of course, fundamentalism runs through almost all religious movements to varying degrees. The great monotheistic religions, in their most classical representations, often retain a moderate traditional anchorage, whether in Christianity, Judaism, the Buddhist and Hindu East or Islam. But these great traditional religions have given rise to radicalised fundamentalist movements, which certainly had their equivalents in past centuries, but which in the present day are resurfacing with unprecedented force, as if the past were coming back at us like a boomerang, a past that we thought was obsolete and definitively resolved.

Talking about a flat Earth is nothing more than anecdotal, or even amusing, fake news... Bringing up to date the genesis of our filiation to Adam and Eve, who appeared only six thousand years ago, is a joyful farce that no one has been interested in for the last few decades. And we can list a number of absurdities passed on by a literal reading of the biblical texts. If all this remained at the level of legend and popular belief, we would have no problem with it, but it turns out that ignorance can have serious unforeseen consequences, when the myth of obscurantism supplants what has already been learned, with the aim of decreeing moral, social and political norms.

If we see this in Islam, which has been led astray and perverted by some, we can also see it in other religions, where fundamentalism is ravaging Buddhism or Hinduism, and to a lesser extent some fundamentalist Catholics, who remain a minority. But there is another fringe of Christianity which, over the last thirty years or so, has never ceased to cause concern because of its exponential growth and expansion: the movements inherited from Protestantism, which have become religions in America under various denominations: Methodists, Mormons, Adventists, Baptists, Presbyterians, etc, and above all the Evangelicals, mainly Pentecostal, who have set themselves the task of influencing social morality and supporting some of the most conservative political options.

A sect can become a religion

Firstly, there are large-scale sectarian nebulas which are designated as such, led by anonymous forces or by a self-proclaimed guru. In the case of the larger ones, these are hidden multinationals with major financial ramifications in various economic sectors.

Beyond these elusive movements which it is not useful to name, the initial definition of the word sect corresponded to the emergence of dissident movements from the major established religions. Thus, the various evangelical and other movements that flourished in the United States were labelled pseudo-Protestant sects by the French, even though in America they were already religions in their own right. This means

that any movement that diverges from its official representation is distinguished from it by becoming a sect which, in time, will give rise to a new religion.

In terms of these offshoots of American Protestantism, the most influential movement is that of the Pentecostal Evangelicals, a religion that is now spreading throughout the world, particularly in countries that used to be predominantly Catholic, such as Brazil.

In social and societal terms, evangelical positions are ultra-conservative: in the United States, they have become truly integrated into political life, supporting the Republicans in presidential elections. This was again the case recently when they helped elect Donald Trump by campaigning for a number of causes, including: scrapping Obamacare (the new social security system founded with difficulty by Barack Obama), which in particular facilitates access to contraception; repealing public funding for family planning clinics, according to their crusade against abortion; and waging a bitter battle against all legislation that would be favourable to LGBT people.

As in the United States, in political terms the Brazilian evangelical movement has become a very powerful lobby which has proved extremely effective in ensuring the unexpected return of a fascist to Latin America.

The American evangelical movement is also heavily involved in Middle East issues, giving its unwavering support to Israel's policy, believing that the Holy Land should be returned to the Hebrew people, without restriction or division. This position can be attributed to a rejection of Islam and a contempt for the Arab world and Muslims in particular.

There is a great proximity between Evangelicalism and hard-line Judaism, that of a fringe of Zionism which campaigns for a greater Israel, and which therefore rejects any territorial division demanded by those calling for the creation of a Palestinian state. For example, the Evangelicals played a major role in the transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. For them, the State of Israel is the fulfilment of God's will as expressed in the Bible.

This is where the two major lobbies come together, one in the name of Yahweh, the other in the name of God and his Messiah, even if the latter is not recognised by the Jewish people who, moreover, include a good number of agnostics who do not give any religious content to their demands. Let us acknowledge, however, that the Israeli people are plural and that they are therefore not unanimous with regard to the annexation of the settlements.

The power of fundamentalism

Concern about the rise of Muslim fundamentalism is still present in many countries around the world. It is both a religious and political reality, the origins of which can be found in the powder keg of the Middle East, where since the 1980s, from Afghanistan to Kuwait and Iraq, Western crusades, particularly American, have destabilised entire regions, encouraging the rise of local opponents who have affiliated themselves to radicalised religious movements. In this way, the rise of Islamism owes much to a deleterious international interventionist policy based on hidden oil interests. In any case, whatever the various origins of fundamentalism, the damage has been done. From Al-Qaeda to Daesh or Boko Haram, the powers of blind fanaticism have struck to create the Islamic State, which has since been reabsorbed but is still active in its scattered groupuscules. This is a peril that has also hit the West hard, particularly France in the attacks of 2015* and others that followed. But let's not just look at our own regions, let's also consider all the extremely deadly attacks, each time claiming

dozens of lives, that affect many Muslims in the countries of the Middle East, and even beyond.

As far as spiritism is concerned, as far back as the 1980s, Spirits expressed a certain concern about the rise of Muslim fundamentalism, which was likely to have an influence on our Western societies. Having noted in recent years that young French people have converted and become radicalised to join Daesh, and that the return of some of them is still problematic, our country must remain extremely vigilant, particularly in prisons, where Islamist propaganda continues to spread.

Nor does fundamentalism escape the other great religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. It is in India in particular, in the continuity of what Gandhi and Nehru already feared in other times, that despite the separatism that gave birth to the two Pakistani territories in 1947 (Pakistan and Bangladesh today), many Muslims still live in India and are regularly persecuted by Hindu or Buddhist fundamentalists.

Similarly in Burma, the Rohingya people, Muslims of a rejected ethnic group, are hunted down and murdered by the military and civilians alike, with the survivors taking refuge in Bangladesh.

*Charlie Hebdo, Villejuif, the Hyper Casher at Porte de Vincennes (7, 8 and 9 January) the Bataclan and café terraces in Paris (13 November)

Chapter 2

THE MAJOR PROBLEMS OF SOCIETIES

So-called societal issues are the subject of controversy and division insofar as they raise ethical problems that are submitted to intellectuals, scientists, representatives of religions, and ultimately to the politicians responsible for legislating on these subjects. The aim is to define positions that are as close as possible to a universal morality that respects freedoms and sets out responsibilities in areas as varied as abortion, euthanasia, sexuality, parenthood, adoption, genetic engineering, suicide and so on. However, the problematic aspect of all these subjects is fundamentally different if we consider them from the angle of spiritist philosophy, taking into account the survival of the Spirit and its reincarnation.

THE QUESTION OF EUTHANASIA

Over time, the end of life has become a subject of concern and controversy. Death has always been a matter of concern to a greater or lesser extent at every period in human history, but there was a religious or even moral response that led to acceptance of the conditions, but without altering the end of life or, above all, shortening it. Lives were shorter and more exposed to all kinds of ills. Illnesses, even those we would consider minor today, had fatal consequences. The question of whether or not to live was not an issue; surviving was already a real challenge in times when diseases, epidemics, wars and cataclysms were rife. The subject of the end of life has been the subject of debate for several decades now, ever since medical and technological progress made it possible to eradicate serious or contagious diseases, to treat victims of serious accidents who would have died in the past, but also and above all to maintain life in forms that come close to a vegetative life maintained thanks to new procedures.

Suicide and euthanasia are certainly distinct subjects, but they do have points of convergence in their moral approach to the end of life. For centuries, it was religions that imposed the codes that made people fear the fires of hell if they transgressed the divine laws that forbade ending life outside its natural term. Nowadays, these issues have shifted to scientists, philosophers and finally legislators, because it has become essential to adapt laws to the new medical and societal data specific to each culture and country. Today, in the West, death is generally regarded as a morbid subject that we keep quiet about or hesitate to discuss, whereas the end-of-life concerns all living people.

The question of euthanasia, the common meaning of which is to give death when a person is irremediably condemned or facing unbearable and mortal suffering in the more or less long term, is regularly in the news, particularly when extreme cases are covered by the media. The Vincent Lambert affair, for example, is a case that is unfortunately not unique and that has divided a family torn between preserving life at all costs for some and ensuring a dignified end to life for others. Having said that, in an over-mediatised society, it is these painful cases that are driving forward the debate and, by the same token, legislation. If the law on the end of life has been amended, it is partly in connection with the case of Chantal Sébire, who was not, strictly speaking, close to the end of her life, but who was suffering from a terrible disease that horribly deformed her face.

The approach to this issue varies from country to country. In Europe, to resolve the issue of difficult end-of-life episodes, the Benelux countries and Switzerland have

adopted positions of principle concerning authorised euthanasia subject to various conditions, and even the right to assisted suicide in Switzerland and Belgium. Attitudes stemming from religious traditions are not neutral in this matter, where there are differences of appreciation between the Protestant countries of the North and the Latin and Catholic countries of the South. The French debate on the subject is undoubtedly influenced by a Judeo-Christian culture in which any attack on life is often an insurmountable taboo: no one has the right to life or death over anyone, and it is therefore the most conservative Catholics who take up the cause in the same way as they demonstrate on other subjects such as homosexuality, same-sex parenthood or abortion. This type of position also exists in certain conservative spiritist circles, where there is a similar view that suffering is a trial willed by God, a trial that must be borne to the end, like an inescapable karma. However, these positions remain in the minority in Christian circles and non-existent among progressive spirits. Clearly, there is no question of questioning the sanctity of life, but of examining the extent to which prolonged therapy is likely to prolong suffering beyond what is reasonable when a pathological condition has become irreversible. We are then entitled to pose the problem differently: is it really a question of preserving life when a person no longer has any means of expressing that life, frozen in both physical and psychological pain, to the point of being nothing, neither in this world nor in the next, stuck between the two?

What does the law say? Our current French legislation on the subject is the result of a long process of reflection on the meaning of therapeutic relentlessness. The legislative framework is now set by laws proposed by MPs Jean Leonetti and Alain Claeys, the most recent of which was passed on 2 February 2016, which state in the preamble: *"Everyone has the right to a dignified and peaceful end of life until death, and healthcare professionals shall use all the means at their disposal to achieve this."* Strictly speaking, this is neither assisted suicide nor euthanasia, even though for the first time there is talk of strong sedation with the aim of helping people to die with less agony. It is in fact a *"right to sleep in order to avoid suffering"*. From now on, a doctor will not be able to oppose a request for deep and continuous sedation from a patient suffering from a serious and incurable condition whose vital prognosis is at risk and who is experiencing suffering that is refractory to treatment, or when his or her decision to discontinue treatment threatens his or her vital prognosis in the short term and is likely to result in unbearable suffering. This sedation is accompanied by a cessation of all treatment, including nutrition and hydration.

The purpose of these texts is both to avoid the practice of euthanasia pure and simple, and to prevent therapeutic overkill which is described here as "unreasonable obstinacy" in the treatment of patients at the end of life, even if the patient is unable to express his or her wishes; in this particular case, a collegial decision by the healthcare team will be required to decide on sedation. Similarly, it is now possible for patients to appoint a trusted support person, whose testimony now takes precedence over any other testimony given by the family or close friends. The 2016 law also provides for the possibility of drawing up "advance directives", i.e., a document in which each citizen can express his or her wishes on the possibility of limiting or stopping medical treatment, in the event of finding him or herself in a desperate situation. These directives are binding on the medical profession, meaning that they must be respected by the medical profession, with two exceptions. The doctor may disregard the directives in the event of a life-threatening emergency, in order to have sufficient time to assess the medical situation, or when the advance directives appear to be manifestly inappropriate or inconsistent with the medical

situation. Where applicable, the doctor's refusal to apply the patient's advance directives is made following a collegial procedure and recorded in the medical file. The trusted support person or, failing that, the family or close friends are informed. Providing for such directives would make it possible to avoid many difficult situations when healthcare staff are reluctant to give sedation or when families faced with such a painful situation do not allow themselves to dispose of the life of their loved ones.

The spiritist point of view

Starting from the essential notion of survival in a vital continuity of the Spirit after death, we can look at the end of life, no longer from a tragic perspective, but from a liberating one. Ending life prematurely would be a mistake, even a crime, and everyone would agree. But to persist in maintaining life at the cost of unbearable suffering when we know that the situation is irreversible is to voluntarily force people to suffer without asking their opinion when they are reduced to a quasi-vegetative state maintained by medical technology. We are then faced with a responsibility that can only be taken on by the family and medical entourage, a responsibility from which the patient is necessarily excluded. This is where, from a moral point of view, there is controversy and contradiction between those who advocate therapeutic prolongation, believing that life is sacred, and those who reasonably want to put an end to unbearable suffering.

The Spiritist point of view in this instance will be that of not perpetuating unnecessary suffering when the situation is irreversible. Medical progress has made it possible to alleviate a certain amount of suffering, but at the same time it has made it possible to prolong this suffering when it is a question of therapeutic relentlessness. This is an unacceptable distortion from an ethical point of view: if science is leading the fight against all physical suffering, it must not at the same time prolong it under the pretext of forcibly preserving life.

The Spirit who disincarnates following an illness or an irreversible handicap that no longer allows him or her to live, will experience in his or her new condition an extraordinary feeling of liberation as he or she rediscovers his or her true nature, that of the Spirit delivered from bodily torments. And there is no justification for this kind of trial, because the divine plan does not include any notion of guilt that would result in the heavy punishment of interminable agony. On the contrary, it is a question of human dignity, of the famous "*right to die with dignity*", which should lead us to share responsibilities between the patient, if he or she is still able, the family and the medical profession, in a solidarity that needs to blossom, a solidarity that consists of taking the most just decisions with respect for people, and let's even say with respect for the Spirit, which is in the process of being disembodied.

If faced with an unbearable situation, wouldn't each of us implore God and human beings to put an end to it? But those who take decisions in place of the dying person are generally in good health and don't always ask themselves how they would feel if they had to go through identical torments. To love is to put oneself in the other person's place, and at the very least to ask the question: how would I myself react if I were in such a situation? It has often been said in spiritism that there is no derogation for euthanasia, which is considered to be an attack on life. It has also been said that all life should be fulfilled to the end, even at the cost of terrible suffering that would contribute to the advancement of the Spirit. This point of view, which corresponds to the answers provided by the afterlife at the end of the nineteenth century, a time when there was no such thing as relentless treatment, is no longer tenable today unless suffering is justified by a punitive or expiatory vision of existence. What's

more, with today's conditions of possible therapeutic relentlessness, which can push the absurdity of a vegetative life very far, these points of view need to be revised, and we can no longer stop at dogmatic conceptions that belong to another era and take no account of developments in medical technology.

The Leonetti Claeys laws represent a definite step forward in terms of end-of-life issues, based on a carefully considered approach. Some people believe that this legislation is still inadequate and that the use of active euthanasia should be further liberalised. The subject remains complex insofar as too much freedom could lead to aberrations and we do not have sufficient hindsight of what is practised more freely in other countries. From a Spiritist point of view, in the face of the abuses that can exist in therapeutic relentlessness or, on the contrary, in too much liberalism, the current laws seem to us to be in line with a good approach to the end of life in dignity, for which the right methods of application will always have to be found on a case-by-case basis. These laws will necessarily need to be supplemented over time as new ideas emerge. But at least the legal framework is already a good thing, providing families and the medical profession with legal guidelines that are as close as possible to ethical requirements when faced with painful questions of conscience.

SUICIDE

In both Christian and Spiritist culture, suicide is generally presented as a reprehensible, guilty and condemnable act, since it represents an attack on life; in a way, it is a crime against oneself. Indeed, for centuries, attempted suicide was punishable by law. For a long time, the Catholic Church showed its disapproval by refusing to give suicides a Christian burial, but today the clergy judge suicide differently, taking into account the distress of people suffering from depression or psychological pathologies. While the condemnation of suicide in *The Book of Spirits* is unequivocal, although the responsibility of the suicidal person is mitigated in certain cases, we must, as in all things, re-examine and refine principles that are not dogmatic, but which must be reconsidered on the basis of a finer understanding of human nature in all its psychological and emotional aspects. And over and above the psychological problems that need to be taken into account, there is another decisive element that needs to be considered: shared responsibility. First of all, from a psychological point of view, should we consider, for example, depression as a weakness resulting from the ill will of the subject (the old theory) or as a real illness? Today, we tend to think of depression as a psychological pathology, which minimises the individual's responsibility when he or she becomes suicidal. In the old concept, we only saw things from the angle of free will, but with the advances of modern psychology, we have come to understand that there is no longer any real use of freedom when the human mind is clouded by its own torments, whether justified or not. However, already in *The Book of Spirits*, even if suicide was considered from the point of view of fault, this fault was minimised when, for example, "*there is sometimes a kind of bewilderment which is like madness*". Degrees of personal culpability were thus already evoked, according to different scenarios. In addition to this psychological aspect, most suicides raise the question of the responsibility of someone other than the suicide victim, a third party or parties. We often notice that when a person experiences major setbacks to their means of living (loss of work, unemployment and therefore a drop or absence of income), a cascade of unforeseen consequences arises, such as abandonment by close family and friends, divorce, loss of housing, etc., to such an extent that from a perfectly normal situation, a person can overnight find themselves ignored by everyone, abandoned, because

they no longer represent anything socially. This is one of the most common causes of suicide, and it raises the issue of responsibility on several levels: that of a society that no longer has the capacity to provide for its citizens, and sometimes that of a spouse or family who abandon the person who used to guarantee a living.

Personal responsibility is difficult to define, as the act is often carried out in a state of serious distress, making it very difficult to measure the extent of responsibility in terms of a free will whose capacity for judgement is necessarily impaired. A person may, rightly or wrongly, feel persecuted, unloved or abandoned, and find themselves in a form of psychological disorder of varying degrees of severity, which in some cases can be described as an illness. This is particularly true of depression, when the subject is obsessed by a terrible feeling of nothingness that becomes real pain. Freedom is then reduced to nothing, and the free will that is supposed to represent the ability to judge a situation in order to make a choice is no longer fully effective.

From free choice to freedom

Free will is a general principle that is eminently Kardecist and therefore linked to Spiritist ethics. Although every human being has, deep down, a fundamental intuition that enables him to differentiate between good and evil, he is not convinced of this in the early stages of his palingenic evolution, when, sometimes blinded by a high idea of himself, he has not yet learnt to consider his neighbour as anything other than a slave at his mercy, or as an individual who can do him a favour, recognise him, admire him or reflect back to him the image he expects of the other. In the early stages of evolution, the absence of consideration for others corresponds to the egoism and pride of the person who looks only to his or her own person and interests, in an absence or insufficiency of morality, morality being the beginning of a recognition of others that can become love of others. Before arriving at this notion, the individual first learns to discover himself and then to recognise others, but it frequently happens during his first lives that he is nothing more than a bad spirit full of himself, despising or hating others whoever they may be; this is what we have seen many times during the difficult deliverances of hardened spirits, devoid of any morality, devoid of any feeling, remaining in the depths of their souls the dominators or criminals they were when they were alive. At this stage, free will is barely perceptible, because the Spirit who delights in evil can hardly guess that there might be a notion of good, a notion that he has never experienced himself, a notion that is foreign to him, a notion that would make him renounce the high opinion he has of himself. And it is this notion that he discovers in certain particular cases, in a brutal way, when through the spiritist deliverance, he finds himself propelled towards a blinding light that he refuses at first. Then, against his will, he finds himself obliged to recognise himself as he is, while a notion of goodness and love is imposed upon him, and then, for the first time, he is called upon to consciously measure the notions of good and evil in the face of his misdeeds, crimes or exactions. It is at this precise moment that the notion of free will takes on greater importance, and will increase as evolution progresses, becoming in some way proportional to the advancement of the Spirit.

If, on the other hand, we are talking about superior spirits, free will, indicating the capacity to choose, will almost become an inadequate concept, because the spirit, having become intelligent and loving, will choose the right moral direction without even having to ask the question. When love becomes the direction and meaning of a life, it is no longer a choice, it is a determination that imposes itself and transcends free will to become not the alternative of an embarrassing choice that questions

morality, but true freedom when the being has become totally itself. This is the degree of freedom that is proportional to the conviction and unreserved impulse of a feeling. Thus, freedom transcends and surpasses free will when the Spirit has reached that stage which was described as the *Higher Spirit* in *The Book of Spirits*.

So, responsibilities vary according to the degree of free will or freedom; they can also be individual or more collective when the environment creates the conditions for a suicidal state. And in this second case, the question of free will must also be asked of those who, through indifference or a lack of solidarity and love, will bear some of the responsibility and therefore guilt for a suicide.

In other, more specific cases, people are also driven to suicide in social, political or war situations, where there is virtually no other solution but to die. The extreme case is that of the tortured resistance fighter whose fate is ultimately fatal and who, having the means to end his or her own life, abridges his or her own suffering. In this specific case, we can consider that the voluntary act of fleeing unbearable suffering when the outcome is known is totally legitimate, and that there is no need to ask ourselves any hard questions because this is more of a crime than a suicide. Furthermore, there are cases of what is known as altruistic suicide, where a person sacrifices himself or herself for others, and these have occurred during war conflicts; in these cases, the aim is no longer to escape from life but to end it in order to save other lives.

Assisted suicide

On another level, suicide is also referred to as an alternative to euthanasia. Physician-assisted suicide refers to the act of providing a patient suffering from an incurable disease with the means to end his or her own life in the face of intolerable suffering. In some countries, certain forms of assisted suicide have been legalised, within a medical and regulated framework. Physician-assisted suicide is illegal in most countries, with the notable exceptions of Switzerland, the Netherlands, Canada and four states in the United States. In these countries, physician-assisted suicide is envisaged under the supervision of a doctor and with the previously considered approval of close family members or friends, in line with the famous formula of the right to die with dignity. In the countries that have embarked on this path, it would appear that there are still a certain number of errors that are more or less regulated by law. In Switzerland, for example, the criminal code punishes anyone who, driven by a selfish motive, provides assistance with a view to suicide. So, we can see the limits of what could go wrong. And from this point of view, there are very specific protocols in these countries, such as Canada, the Netherlands and the United States in the states of Oregon, Washington, Vermont and Montana. This delicate question of assisted suicide opens up a new ethical debate; it is undoubtedly premature to decide from a spiritist point of view; and for the moment, it only concerns the countries mentioned, with a lack of feedback and hindsight in the face of the importance of the problems posed.

In conclusion, with regard to suicide in general, there is a first position, that of people who are opposed to any acceptance of suicide, considering that in all cases, without exception, it is a crime against oneself which, for believers in an afterlife, risks causing the worst torments after death.

From the Spiritist point of view, we know that the act of voluntarily shortening one's life is a serious fault, the consequence of which will be that the Spirit, not having completed its life, will have to be reincarnated more quickly in order to once again envisage achieving what has not been achieved. But beyond this general notion,

there are many special cases: for example, we need to take into account the age of the suicidal person, who may already have completed most of his or her life; sometimes these are no longer acts of distress, but deliberate actions taken by atheists as well as believers. And then, of course, we have to consider all the cases mentioned above in relation to the responsibility of the human environment, where an entire society is responsible for the lack of attention, benevolence and charity that lead to despair and the carrying out of a fatal act.

We also know that the person who puts an end to his life does not incur divine or spiritual punishment. The Spirit, in its premature return to the ethereal life, will have to understand its gesture, measure its uselessness and return more quickly to the incarnate life to accomplish what has been ignored or abridged. The Spirit is not punished, he is simply subjected, like everyone else, to the law of evolution which passes through the necessary incarnation, and in this he is helped by the loving and understanding presence of his Guide and other loving Spirits.

JUSTICE AND PUNISHMENT

The repression of crimes and misdemeanours is a subject that all decision-makers in all countries have had to deal with in order to maintain a certain social order, and this has been the case throughout the history of mankind. It is necessary to punish all transgressive behaviour and to compensate victims for the harm they have suffered. Security and civil peace cannot be maintained without a well-structured police force and judiciary in a country; these are inherently regalian functions that fall to the powers that be in the interests of fairness, security and impartiality. In reality, laws have always been passed to prevent people from taking the law into their own hands, with all the consequences that this can entail, including inevitably subjective and sometimes disproportionate reactions. Laws have been put in place to this end; as far back as the Middle Ages, the quarantine was introduced, a period during which victims and perpetrators were not to meet in order to appease hatred and prevent individuals from taking the law into their own hands.

In place of the ancestral and archaic law of retaliation, which inflicted the same punishment on the guilty party as that inflicted on the victim, a scale of penalties has been introduced, graduated according to the seriousness of the act committed and its consequences for the victims, taking into account to a certain extent the mental state of the guilty party by introducing mitigating penalties in certain circumstances.

Legislators have developed a series of penalties for offences and crimes. Capital punishment has always been applied, mainly in criminal cases but not only in blood crimes. In applying the law, the judge decided on the life or death of an individual according to criteria that are still debatable.

To judge properly, it is necessary to determine exactly where the fault lies, how it can be qualified, how serious it is, what the degree of responsibility of the accused is and then what sanctions should be applied so that justice is done for the victim but, above all, so that the offender is able to understand his fault and has the opportunity to make amends.

Justice does not always respond to these questions fairly, but in the light of societal criteria that are sometimes far removed from the very essence of each human being, and there is always a tendency, to use a trivial expression, to punish the person holding the knife and not the person or persons who led to this extremity. Admittedly, laws have evolved over time; we have tried to be fairer and more understanding when it comes to certain offences.

However, there are still cases where criminals will never be liable to trial and yet play

with the lives of others for essentially pecuniary gain: when populations are deliberately starved, when harmful substances are injected into agriculture for ever-higher yields, when laboratories know the harmful effects of certain medicines. Thus, in the relativity of judgement, there are murderers who are more guilty in truth than those who kill out of anger, passion or misery, such as those people who appear to be honest and sincere, and who, coldly, know the risks to the lives of populations, but do not give up for strictly financial reasons. In this way, those who are truly guilty in moral terms still escape any form of justice. Sometimes, as recent examples have shown, justice is biased in favour of the powerful, whether it be large industrial groups against employees, or in relative tolerance towards people accused of tax fraud or money laundering.

Spiritism and the law of evolution lead us to study criminal behaviour from a different angle, considering that we live on a relatively inferior planet where consciousness is still narrow at all levels. Some people have a criminal past that sometimes catches up with them in this life, generally because they have not found the family and social environment conducive to erasing unconscious memories that resurface in similar situations. Of course, no judge would be able to understand and accept this, because the criteria used to assess such cases are all too human and do not take into account certain evolutionary parameters. Moreover, in addition to less moral development, living conditions are precarious. In addition, emotional deficiencies of all kinds and, above all, a lack of reference points and values, expose people to deviant behaviour.

Abolition of the death penalty

Collective responsibility must be considered when states foment warlike situations, with all the indirect consequences that this entails. On the subject of radicalism, for example, the root causes are to be found in the foreign policy pursued for years, particularly by the United States, which has produced a veritable powder keg in the Middle East. So, when it comes to Muslim fundamentalism and its barbaric terrorist actions, it is difficult to judge people who have been conditioned from an early age and whose faculties of discernment have been abolished. Guilt must be measured by the degree of conscience of the person who transgresses the law. Admittedly, in France we have created the excuse of insanity to avoid punishing certain crimes, but we should go further in mitigating responsibility.

We are often faced with a two-tier justice system depending on the social class to which you belong. Enlightened, progressive judges who courageously try to be objective in their work are often reproached simply because they go against the grain of the common, right-thinking mentality.

In the collective imagination, justice means condemnation, but it should also, and above all, mean providing for and arranging the rehabilitation of the person who has committed a fault. The indispensable justice should not be down-to-earth and cold, but should take into account the spiritual dimension of every human being. We are all spirits, created simple, ignorant and highly fallible. In the course of our successive lives, we have all committed reprehensible acts, and the progress we have made has been thanks to the attention and understanding of more advanced beings. Punishment does not mean destruction, still less killing, and we must question the death penalty, which still exists in too many countries.

It was abolished in France in 1981, thanks to the determination of President François Mitterrand and the courageous fight led by Justice Minister Robert Badinter. This victory was the result of years, indeed centuries, of struggle by abolitionists. Many enlightened minds, such as the philosophers of the Enlightenment, Voltaire, Diderot,

Rousseau, Montesquieu and Condorcet, committed writers such as Victor Hugo and Lamartine, and politicians such as Jean Jaurès and Léon Blum, fought this battle relentlessly. Several Presidents of the Republic, such as Armand Fallières, have almost systematically applied the right to pardon conferred on them by the constitutions in force.

In other times, the death penalty applied in France had to be accompanied by prior suffering, so that the guilty party could atone for his or her crime and to show the people what it cost to break the law. So, for centuries, the death penalty and all its tortures varied according to the nature of the crime, with the worst horrors reserved for regicides. Executions were carried out in public, the intention being to impress the public and deter would-be criminals, but this never had any dissuasive effect. Above all, in the event of a miscarriage of justice, it was no longer possible to make amends. In this respect, let's not forget the infamous cases of Jean Callas, wrongly convicted and executed, and the Christian Ranucci case, closer to our time.

Abolition is therefore a major step forward, and was already on the agenda in Allan Kardec's *The Book of Spirits* in the 19th century. And it is a battle that is still being fought today in many countries.

In 2016, Amnesty International counted 104 countries in the world that had completely abolished the death penalty, and 140 if we include countries that have not abolished it but do not apply it. The number of executions has tended to fall over the years, although there have been peaks, as in 2015, a year that saw an upsurge in terrorist attacks. Amnesty International recorded 1,032 executions in 2016 and 993 in 2017, the overwhelming majority of which were carried out in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan. Not to mention China and North Korea, which do not disclose their figures in the name of state secrecy but are thought to number in the thousands.

The countries that still apply the death penalty are mainly in Africa, South Asia and North America. In a large democratic country like the United States, death row is a disgrace to humanity. Prisoners sometimes wait for years before being executed, years during which they suffer humiliation and total dehumanisation. Their sentences are often handed down at the end of sometimes botched trials, with no real defence for the defendants, most of whom are of colour and of modest means.

According to Spiritist principles, no one has the right to life or death over any other one. If crime is always reprehensible and never justifiable, it must be punished by measures appropriate to the culprit, but the official institutions of all countries will eventually have to abolish capital punishment. Human institutions are closely linked to the general level of evolution of the planet; therefore, crime will one day disappear on Earth, not because of threats and sanctions like capital punishment, but because of the evolution of humanity in understanding and morality. Every human being has the right to dignity and respect, and this means giving everyone the opportunity to be educated in good conditions, in an understanding family and social environment that leads human beings towards the best in themselves, rather than letting them stumble over the pitfalls inherent in their still relatively undeveloped nature, which they may already have experienced in previous lives. Many proud minds on Earth refuse to listen to this statement, and yet mentalities must evolve in this direction because it is through humility and courage that institutions will advance and not through threats.

Earthlings are still conditioned by a heavy past of suffering, hatred and difficulties that they have not yet overcome and which lead them to react with impulses, linked both to their past and to the current environment in which they live. At times, they will tend to react instinctively with violence, without realising the seriousness of their actions. Just as we have introduced a civil majority, we should introduce a majority of

discernment. The education of children and adolescents is a matter that concerns society as a whole, not just the judiciary.

The prison in question

The issue of deprivation of liberty is a recurring one, and one that is regularly revived in the light of current events. Just as executions increased in 2015 due to the terrorist surge, so incarceration for this reason increased significantly; however, in France, the proportion of individuals incarcerated for terrorism-related acts in prisons is low (currently around 2,000 radicalised inmates out of a prison population of around 70,000), just as the proportion of people imprisoned for blood crimes remains limited (around 7%).

Most are imprisoned for minor offences; many incarcerations are linked to the drugs problem, and here again, we should not be looking for the real culprits who are pulling the strings, reaping huge profits without exposing themselves to punishment. In addition, around a quarter of the prison population is made up of people imprisoned on a preventive basis, i.e., without any evidence of guilt, and the length of this preventive detention is increasing because of the difficulty of reaching court decisions more quickly.

While it is obvious that in a democratic country it is necessary to comply with the law and to assume the consequences of non-compliance, the prison sentence must be proportionate to the degree of conscience and guilt of the offender. You can't blame the judges who apply the criminal law, and who come in for sharp criticism when a prisoner is released on parole, allowing him to commit crimes, although these high-profile cases remain very marginal. While incarceration is still a necessity that is difficult to circumvent on our planet, one aspect of imprisonment that is too often forgotten is that it should re-educate and prepare prisoners for their release, their return and their integration into society. Yet this programme is often neglected, not only because of a lack of resources but also because of a lack of political will - in fact, quite the opposite is true.

For decades, politicians have been preoccupied with the issue of prisons, and each Minister of Justice has proposed measures to modernise and, above all, build new prisons to remedy the recurring problem of prison overcrowding. At present, there are around 70,000 prisoners for 52,000 places. This leads inexorably to overcrowding which, on the one hand, dehumanises prisoners by making detention conditions degrading, and on the other hand, encourages recidivism. In a country that is going through economic crises, as France is, and where public finances are exsanguinated, it is always difficult to get expensive projects adopted to improve the lot of prisoners; and then, it is constant that public opinion does not wish to finance the material well-being of criminals, nor does it wish to have a prison establishment close to its home. Moreover, the construction of new places is a last resort for some observers such as Adeline Hazan, controller general of deprivation of liberty: *"The more places we have, the more we incarcerate; it is preferable to use other alternatives so that prison is the last resort and we try to arrange sentences without incarceration. She notes that prison overcrowding is responsible for "violence", and is the "breeding ground for a form of radicalisation in the broadest sense". This makes it impossible to respect the right to maintain family ties, the right to work or the right to health, all of which are essential to the prisoner's reintegration"*.

The 2014 law, on the initiative of Christiane Taubira, then Minister of Justice, moves in this direction as it provides for punishing the less serious offences - which make up the bulk of the reasons for incarceration - more effectively by adapting the sentence

to each offender, without systematically resorting to prison, in order to better prevent repeat offending by leaving greater discretion to magistrates.

France, the country of human rights, is regularly condemned by the European Court for violating Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which states that: "No one shall be subjected to degrading treatment. This is what happens regularly in many French prisons.

It's hard enough to be deprived of your freedom, and the testimonies of certain 'celebrities' imprisoned in conditions that are more comfortable than for ordinary prisoners, in the notorious VIP quarters, have made us all aware of what imprisonment represents. It's terrible in itself and hard to imagine when you're on the outside. It should also give pause for thought to those who are proposing that true life imprisonment should be applied, i.e. with no possibility or hope of getting out, which is tantamount to civil death.

It is only right that acts of violence should be punished and that certain individuals should be prevented from causing harm, but life imprisonment is an admission of impotence. We need to re-educate the perpetrators, and to do that we need to offer prison conditions that are conducive to change. However, this is not yet the case, even if progress is being made here and there, thanks in particular to associations concerned with the fate of prisoners. Under the aegis of the *International Prison Observatory*, a law has been passed allowing any member of parliament to enter any prison in France at any time of the day or night and in any premises (including solitary confinement) in order to ensure that the rules of detention are respected.

Contrary to popular belief, prison is not a place where prisoners are free to learn, work and develop. A few high-profile cases should not distort reality. It is difficult to study in prison, as teachers are not always willing to intervene. As with all aspects of life in prison, this requires a special commitment or a great deal of outside help. However, most prisoners are financially very deprived, as are their families; moreover, family ties tend to weaken if the prisoner is incarcerated for a long time or if the prison is far from home.

Work, which has become a problem in our societies with record unemployment rates, is even more of a problem in prisons. Work is scarce, poorly paid and poorly supervised, with no contracts or protection. Only the most resourceful or well-educated can keep themselves busy, which does nothing to improve the lot of those who, already in society, have not benefited from the best conditions to prepare for life.

With no work and no money, and with external aid suspended, it is difficult to live in prison, even if you are provided with food and accommodation, as some people like to say. There are other personal expenses that have to be met, which are much more expensive in prison, and financing them inevitably encourages some people to engage in dubious practices.

The lack of activities and occupations forces prisoners to spend long days locked up in cramped, poorly equipped and sometimes unsanitary cells, in promiscuity with other prisoners in the same condition and suffering, which generates tension and violence worse than that seen on the outside. Many prisons are dilapidated and in a poor state of health, with pathologies developing and far too few pharmaceutical or human resources to deal with them effectively. If we consider that many prisoners are incarcerated for drug trafficking and consumption, it is obvious that the shortage will not only generate physical problems but will also encourage all kinds of illicit trafficking.

It is also clear that some prisoners would be better off in care establishments than in prisons.

Inactivity, promiscuity and moral misery lead to physical violence, sometimes very serious. Sexual violence is not uncommon, and rapes are committed, not always without the knowledge of the supervising staff. This means that people, generally young people, who are serving sentences for minor offences, will witness or sometimes be the victims of criminal acts that are much more serious than those of which they are accused.

Visiting hours are often cut short due to lack of space or time, and privacy is not respected, while sometimes families come from far away, incurring heavy transport costs as a result.

The situation in prison gives prisoners the impression that they are not really human beings any more, given the lack of privacy and humiliations such as body searches. Violence and bullying are commonplace and are sometimes perpetrated by prison staff. Sex offenders in particular, the so-called "pointers", are very often mistreated.

Prison is ultimately a world of violence, violence between inmates, between inmates and prison staff, or violence against oneself expressed in suicides and self-harm. This is not to stigmatise prison staff, who suffer from a lack of resources and sometimes a lack of consideration, but there are still many cases where violence is allowed to run riot out of indifference, weariness or quite simply the more or less conscious idea that, after all, we are not really dealing with human beings like any others. We are all potential prisoners, because distress, abandonment and hardship can affect us or our loved ones. We need to get away from this repressive logic and think about how to ensure that prisoners do not become repeat offenders, by adapting their sentences to prevent repeat offending and by avoiding any dry, unmonitored, unprepared release, i.e., by not handing an ex-prisoner over to all sorts of possible turpitude.

Louise Michel (1830-1905), who in the course of her long revolutionary career was imprisoned on numerous occasions for her humanist struggle, has been talking to us about prison ever since:

"Prison is not a good solution. Prison is a rejection by the social group of a certain number of elements who will be excluded temporarily, but very often permanently, from that same social group. And I say for the sake of morality that we should have no pretensions in this area. Man risks temptation in many ways, every second, every hour, every day of his existence. Evil is often a lack of good, a lack of love, a lack of exchange, a lack of communication. It's no longer a question of thinking about prison, it's a question of building a society without prison, it's a question of putting an end to the prison system, which is completely useless and in no way prevents the degradation and perversion of the individual. Perversion has its source, its roots, within societies and outside the prison system. It can take on greater importance and scope within the prison itself. A person who steals, who assaults, who kills, is rarely free of his act, rarely free of his gesture. So, we have to help them understand. We have to help them become free. It is not a prison, it is not incarceration, that can provide this help in understanding, this desired freedom for our neighbour.

Abolishing prison means increasing the degree of responsibility at the level of the social community, i.e., taking care of the most deprived, the most unfortunate in spirit as well as in material wealth on Earth. Forgetting to think of others, forgetting to love, is what foment the future delinquent, the future prisoner. Let's insist on our responsibility, let's insist on the education of children and adolescents on Earth."

We need to give more thought to the causes of violence and deviance of all kinds, and not turn a blind eye to what is happening in our suburbs, for example, where young people with no jobs, no bearings, no future live in a society that crushes its children, inciting them to violence in every possible way by keeping them in the dream and the easy way rather than in the reality of life. Greater vigilance is needed to ensure that the traumas suffered are not translated into subsequent violence, such as abused children who become abusers in their turn, or victims of sexual violence who become rapists by unconsciously repeating bad patterns. And then, of course, society would have to take account of reincarnation and the weight of past lives and adapt its educational and repressive parameters.

SEXUALITY, HOMOSEXUALITY, TRANSSEXUALITY

The question of sexuality has been present throughout the ages of humanity as a means of reproducing living species, in an instinct that is accepted or repressed depending on the era and culture. Each religion has defined its own codes, focusing on what is right and what is wrong. In our Judeo-Christian culture, anything to do with sexuality has long been a taboo subject. For the Catholic religion, sexuality had to be limited to its reproductive function, and outside this objective, the rule was abstinence, a rule that obviously remained only theoretical. For the various religious orders, celibacy and, for some of them, the vow of chastity was imposed, requirements that were often circumvented by concealed relationships, but also by deviations with dramatic consequences for the sexual victims of certain clerics.

Conversely, the liberalisation of morals, by denouncing the hypocrisy of a puritanical society, generated other dysfunctions leading to a hyper-sexualisation and trivialisation of the subject in a totally uninhibited discourse, materialised by libertinism and pornography. Added to this is the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis, which has generated a number of complexes and useless neuroses, giving sexuality an omnipresent role in human behaviour. This question of sexuality has conditioned the organisation of our societies. Our French law on marriage and parentage has been modified in line with changing mores, even if new legislative provisions lead to sometimes vehement protests from conservative movements that do not accept legislation that disregards the so-called laws of nature.

In France, "marriage for all" is a remarkable advance in our legislation, recognising that everyone has the right to live a normal life, whatever their sexual orientation. This has not always been the case, since for centuries homosexuality was condemned and even punished.

Homosexuality has always existed in all countries and at all times, sometimes openly assumed and shown in broad daylight, but more often hidden and lived with the shame of abnormality and the fear of social judgement. And while in many countries ideas and laws have evolved, this is not the case in countries where homosexuality is still criminally repressed, where homosexuals suffer corporal punishment, humiliation and even death. Lovers of the same sex are punished in around a hundred countries, mainly in Africa and the Middle East. It is punishable by physical punishment, imprisonment or even death (usually by stoning) in eleven countries: Afghanistan, Brunei, Iran, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Somalia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Homosexuality is sometimes frowned upon, even though it is not officially repressed, and many people have secretly hidden their love affairs or their sexual habits in order to avoid humiliation and social reprisals of all kinds.

We remember, for example, that homosexuals were among the first to be exterminated by the Nazi regime.

From the point of view of religions, just like heterosexual sexuality outside marriage, homosexuality is rejected by most religious authorities, although here too there is a wide disparity of opinion among practising Christians. It should be noted that in Rio in July 2013, Pope Francis expressed his acceptance of homosexuality, no longer wishing to differentiate between gay and straight Christians.

Many causes have been sought to explain a sexual orientation that does not conform to the natural laws of gender. Freudian psychoanalysis sees an unconscious mechanism linked to relationships with one or both parents. While this educational explanation is justified in certain cases, it is far from being a general one, because it is limited to the present life, which is still considered by many to be unique. However, every being born on Earth has already lived and had sexual experiences that can have consequences for their present sexual orientation. Thus, in the course of their evolution, Spirits must undergo sexual experiences in which they are alternately male and female, in order to experience situations linked to the particularities of one sex or the other. There is, however, a predominantly feminine or masculine nature, so when the spirit is confronted with an experience that is different from what it is used to, it may have difficulty in assuming its new state, including its sexuality. It is often difficult to become a man after having lived several consecutive lives as a woman, and vice versa. There is thus a sexual bipolarity in each of us, experienced more or less successfully in the early stages of our return to matter, and more precisely at the essential moment of physical transformation during puberty, when various elements intervene - educational, family, social, political - weighing on our consciences and sometimes preventing the fulfilment desired by the Spirit. It is at this time that some people experience new forms of sexuality.

It also happens that during pregnancy, because of the permanent telepathy that links her to the Spirit who reincarnates, the mother unconsciously imprints her fears or hopes on the child. Thus, a child who is expected with the hope that it will be of one sex or the other may be influenced in its future personality (we have all heard the expression tomboy, for example). Admittedly, this circumstance is limited today, as we can find out the child's sex fairly quickly and avoid making any hazardous projections, at least in this respect.

Whatever the case, homosexuality is not a perversion; it is an expression of love in the same way as heterosexuality and should not be reduced to dangerous foibles or primitive instincts. Sexual deviancy does exist, with, for example, too many cases of paedophilia proliferating, particularly in religious circles such as the Catholic Church, but also in many other circles that have not yet been the subject of specific investigations.

Homosexuality and bisexuality are ways of experiencing sexuality in the same way as heterosexuality; all behaviour is respectable if there is no constraint, if you respect your partner. We can therefore say that the feeling of loving can be expressed in many different ways, and is not limited to the reproductive requirement.

Transsexuality

Sometimes, the pain of being incarnated as one sex or the other is so great that the person wants to change their appearance and anatomy through surgery and medical treatment. Numerous testimonies illustrate the distress felt from childhood onwards at not having a body adapted to one's psyche, at feeling like a boy in a girl's body or vice versa. The Spirits have enlightened us on this subject: *"Transsexuality or*

transgenderism is the result of an emotional disorder at the very moment of conception. It is the result of a transformation from one sexual pole to the other, which means that the man who has become a woman, or the woman who has become a man, will not be able to assume the future sexuality, the new sexuality within his new vital conditioning of a physical order. It is not possible to modify transsexuality, it is not possible to provide therapy for this particularly distressing emotional state. The only possible therapy is family, individual and social therapy, love therapy and acceptance therapy. Transsexuals must come to terms with their condition. However, it is a painful situation that plunges those close to them into anguish, incomprehension and even rejection of the person who is transgressing the laws of nature".

In France, around one in every 4,000 children is born without any clearly defined sexual characteristics. Since French law provides for only two sexes, male or female, decisions to declare the child a girl or a boy have to be taken quickly by the parents under medical and social pressure. However, the choice made at such an early age does not always correspond to the child's true sexual nature, and serious, painful and mutilating operations are often carried out to ensure that the child's sexual identity matches the official declaration. On 14 February 2019, the European Parliament condemned this mutilating treatment, but we should go further and do what is done in other countries such as Germany, Australia, Malaysia, Nepal, South Africa and India, where, in addition to the male and female sex, the words "other" or "undetermined" are added. The European Council also adopted guidelines in 2013 in favour of recognising categories other than female or male, to take account of the situation of what are known as intersex people.

We are all reincarnated spirits who must go through different sexual experiences, but these are merely contingencies linked to matter. Sexual polarity may prevail during our evolution; it dominates during incarnation and manifests itself in the physical envelope, but at the end of the evolutionary cycle, there is no longer a dominant polarity, there is only the Spirit who has reached the end of its evolution and is forever removed from the vicissitudes and contingencies of incarnate life.

The acceptance of different forms of sexuality in society leads us to look at human relationships and social structures differently.

The traditional family with one father and one mother will no longer be the only model of reference; we may have a family with two mothers or two fathers. The important thing is that the child of these couples, whether adopted or medically procreated, is loved and cared for, as in any other family. The law of persons evolves over time, adapting to the human, intellectual and moral evolution of each era; for example, marriage is a social institution that marked a certain progress in its time by structuring society. The purpose of marriage at the time was to protect its members, in particular the children, to whom it conferred rights and the wife resources. Marriage is interpreted in many different ways, with some civilisations practising polygamy, but more rarely polyandry. The evolution of women's rights through their integration into the world of work is upsetting ancestral patterns and, as a result, marriage no longer provides the necessary protection. Marriage is losing ground and is often interrupted by increasingly frequent divorces. Tomorrow's society, as it exists in more evolved spheres, will no longer be the same. There will be no need for institutions of this kind to regulate and protect. The family structure will no longer have the same *raison d'être*; every human being will have the same rights, will be a child of the Earth with

the right to the same protection, the same education, the same affection, cared for by a society concerned about the fate of every child, whoever their progenitors may be.

RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, SEXISM

Racism in all its forms is one of the oldest forms of prejudice. This belief in a human hierarchy remains the cause of countless discriminations and massacres perpetrated since the dawn of time. Contrary to the principle that all human beings have equal rights and dignity, a principle enshrined in various founding texts including *the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, racist ideology has most often developed as a justification for the domination of one human group over another. The most blatant example of this is colonisation, when one country unilaterally invaded another, appropriated its natural resources and authoritatively ruled over a people with no regard for its history, language or culture.

Racism is not just about skin colour, even though for centuries people of colour have suffered humiliation and exploitation at the hands of white people. This was the breeding ground for colonisation, but also, and above all, for slavery, where people of colour were seen as nothing more than commodities to be bought and sold like any other goods.

Even if slavery has officially disappeared, there remains a form of mistrust, even contempt, towards people of colour, which is skilfully cultivated in certain places and conveyed by social or family prejudices. There are still many accounts today of discrimination in hiring, healthcare and in the suspicion of crimes or misdemeanours that affect people of colour more than others. There is a barrier between the poor and the rich, between the inhabitants of the rich countries of the northern hemisphere and those less well off in the southern hemisphere, a barrier that leads to exploitation, to a form of modern slavery in the name of profit and with contempt for human life.

Rejection of others is not limited to skin colour; it is a tendency to exclude everything that is different, out of fear, atavism, lack of openness and culture, but more generally out of sentiment. There are phenomena of rejection based on sexual orientation that still manifest themselves violently today; there are countries where homosexuals are repressed, even condemned and lynched. In France, it took centuries for us to finally understand that love can take different forms and that the union of two people of the same sex is just as respectable as a heterosexual union.

It is also a form of religious racism that has generated atrocities for centuries. Dissident religious minorities have been excluded or even attempted to be destroyed by the dominant religious authorities, such as the Protestants who were massacred for centuries because of their differences with the positions of the Catholic Church. But the persecution suffered by the Jews is by far the oldest and generated the worst horrors, culminating in the Shoah. This detestation goes back a very long way and is based not only on philosophical criteria but also on a more material aspect; Jews were supposed to possess money; moreover, they were largely despoiled during the Second World War. Judaism was the only religion to authorise the practice of interest-bearing loans from the outset, a practice strictly forbidden by other religions, notably the Catholic religion, which only accepted it much later. The Jews were forbidden to take up certain professions, confining them to commercial activities. Greed and jealousy are not unrelated to this hatred.

So, anti-Semitism and theories based on the superiority of one race, which had their darkest hour during the Second World War, still threaten when extreme right-wing

ideologies tend to resurface in many countries, when old theories, old racial hatreds, resurface, concepts taken up and developed by certain reactionary groups.

The status of women in history and in the world

Sexism is also a fact of society that reveals the moral inferiority of our planet. For centuries, women have been considered inferior to men, deprived of the same freedoms and rights, exploited in every way, including sexually, and seen as necessarily subject to men and their laws. Even the Catholic authorities questioned whether or not women had a soul. Catholic institutions do not recognise that women have the same rights and responsibilities as men: there are no women ordained as priests and, consequently, they cannot become bishops or popes.

Deprived of rights and recognition, women have nevertheless participated in social life just as much as men. Unentitled workers in the shadow of men, they have made a major contribution to the functioning of society through their work and their family position. During crucial periods such as the First World War, they demonstrated that they could replace men in the factory, in the fields and in the office, but they were quickly sent back to their homes as soon as the men returned from the front. Many women have played a major role in the past, often initiating major decisions but always behind the scenes, whether they were mothers, daughters or the wives of kings. In the darkest periods of history, they played an active part in defending their country, fighting for the rights of the weak and oppressed in all revolutions and popular uprisings, such as the Paris Commune in 1871. During the Second World War, when they did not yet have the right to vote, many women behaved heroically in the Resistance, sometimes losing their lives without being recognised for their merits. In addition, many men who have had major responsibilities testify to the invaluable presence of their wives by their side.

Of course, things have evolved in step with human evolution on Earth. These advances have been the struggle of a few men, but above all of courageous women who have not hesitated to sacrifice their lives to defend their cause publicly, like the pioneer Olympe de Gouges who died on the scaffold in 1793. These developments are recent in Western countries, but still non-existent in some Middle Eastern countries. In France, it was only in 1945 that women were able to vote, it was only in 1967 that they were able to work and open a bank account without their husband's permission, and even if things are changing, including in men's attitudes, there are still absolutely unjustifiable pay gaps and sexist career paths.

This discrimination is intolerable, and it's important to get involved with organisations that defend the rights of women in countries where they are exploited, infantilised and reduced to their sexual and reproductive role.

Spiritism teaches us that we are all born absolutely equal, ignorant at the beginning of our incarnate journey, but all destined to evolve and change. So it is with the inhabitants of our planet that we go through many very different incarnate experiences where, in turn, we are men and women, with white skin or coloured skin, living in a rich country or a disaster-stricken country, incarnating in a favourable environment or on the contrary in a hostile environment, and yet in all these experiences where we are white, black, poor or rich, exploited or exploiter, it is always the same spirit, the same entity that grows thanks to these different situations. The black man despised today was yesterday's white man, and the white man who claims to be superior has also been or will become a person of colour. Women have been men in the past and men have been or will be women in other

lives. These different incarnated situations are not punishments or expiations that some supporters of karma imagine, but circumstances that enable us to understand and progress in consciousness and feeling.

Spiritism condemns all forms of racism and ostracism, but at the same time encourages acts of solidarity and commitment. So, we must always denounce racist comments and acts of all kinds, and assert our humanist certainties, which fortunately are shared by other movements. It is through action, through words, through education, that consciences will open up and society will progress. Hatred and rejection of others are very often linked to ignorance; we therefore need to get to know others, who are different in terms of culture, customs, religion and social position, through exchanges that are always rich in learning and understanding; which does not exclude cultivating our mutual differences, because they represent an asset for everyone. The ghettos of big cities, where people from the same ethnic or religious community gather together, prevent exchange, discovery and understanding, as everyone remains frozen in their positions, fearful of others and their culture.

Moreover, there are peoples who are said to be savage, but who have more thought and wisdom than the inhabitants of the great metropolises, stressed and conditioned by a materialistic society that leaves no room for sentiment.

The question of disability

All the masks of ostracism must fall without exception: racist or ethnic discrimination, other states considered inferior, a modest social position scorned, sexual difference, physical appearance in the face of disability. All these criteria for discrimination mean that people who are less spoiled by nature are looked down upon.

It is also a racism of fear, of social reflex in the face of a person who does not use the same language, who does not show the same attitude in terms of looks and gestures, who is different, and yet behind a different physical appearance that is sometimes monstrous, there is a spirit that also has its history, its experiences and that needs to be understood and loved in order to progress. Up until now, the psychological approach to disability has been totally flawed in that the spirit has never been considered in the matter. Yet these beings are perhaps more in need of love and attention than others who have experienced trauma, accident or serious illness, sometimes in their present life, sometimes in their previous lives, when their return to incarnate life followed a brutal and sometimes atrocious end in their previous life.

So, we must do more than simply look after these beings, we must consider them as fully-fledged human beings, which they are as incarnate spirits. They therefore have the same right to respect and dignity. This means equality, culture and the opportunity to contribute to society through work. They must have access to appropriate education, appropriate care, the opportunity to learn and to work. Structures must be created and developed in the various schools and universities. We need to offer adapted activities, and in this area, there is still a lot of progress to be made in adapting workstations to provide good working conditions. We sometimes prefer to give subsidies rather than offer a real job, which these people feel is a form of humiliation and rejection.

All living beings on Earth are creatures born of a divine will and love, in which respect there can be no natural superiority of one spirit over another. There are the same evolutionary constraints and the same difficulties for everyone, with the need to have

various incarnate experiences in which we are confronted together with different realities that enable the spirit to progress in understanding and feeling.

ABORTION - VOLUNTARY TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

From time immemorial, in the absence of reliable contraception, women have been exposed to numerous unwanted pregnancies; and living conditions were such in some circles that the prospect of additional mouths to feed represented a real source of anxiety and disruption for the rest of the family. Abortion is therefore a social phenomenon that can be traced back to ancient times. In all societies, people have resorted to various means, some of them barbaric and totally unhygienic. Pregnancies were terminated by the absorption of abortifacient herbs, abdominal pressure and curettage without anaesthetic, often fatal to the woman having the abortion. Sordid accounts of these practices can be found in the depths of our countryside in times not so long ago.

Abortion has always been condemned by societal codes and religious authorities, with a few exceptions, such as in the Middle Ages when it was considered that the soul only took hold after thirty or forty days. Voluntary termination of pregnancy was forbidden and punishable by law, so women resorted to it in secret, turning to other women, angel makers, who often were getting paid for their services.

Outlawed and punished in many countries, abortion has been strictly prohibited in France since 1920 and punishable by law, just as contraception was prohibited and punishable by imprisonment at a time when there was an urgent need to repopulate a country that had been bled dry after the First World War. In 1942, abortion was declared a crime against the State under the Vichy laws, and women who resorted to it or practised it risked the death penalty. This was the case for Marie-Louise Giraud, who was guillotined in 1943 for having performed numerous abortions on the grounds that she was preventing future patriots from living, while at the same time thousands of Jewish children were being sent to their deaths! Clandestine abortions continued, punishable by prison sentences, throwing entire families into distress. It took the fight of many women (343 sluts' manifesto - April 1971) and above all the Bobigny trial (1972) where Gisèle Halimi, a lawyer, defended her client's cause and obtained her acquittal.

It was Simone Weil who, as part of the Chirac government, prepared and passed the law on voluntary termination of pregnancy in January 1975, a courageous battle in the face of a mainly male assembly. At the time, many clandestine abortions were carried out, but in different ways for different social classes, with great injustice for women. Women of modest means resorted to clandestine abortions, exposing them to repression and often to health or fertility problems, when they were not in danger of death. On the other hand, women from the wealthier classes had the means to travel to neighbouring countries where abortion was performed for a fee, particularly in England and Switzerland. The 1975 law therefore represented a major advance in women's rights.

It remains a difficult and often cruel choice, and one from which we cannot emerge unscathed.

Generally speaking, it was accepted in all circles that recourse to voluntary termination of pregnancy could be justified when the mother's life was in danger or when the pregnancy was the result of rape, or even when the unborn child risked severe handicaps. In such cases, it is better to end a life in the making prematurely than to let it go to term with all the risks and difficulties involved.

The proposed time limits for abortion vary from country to country, and correspond either to a period when the child is considered medically viable, or to an old idea according to which, for spiritualists, the soul would join the body in formation. This was the case even within the Church in the Middle Ages, where it was considered that the soul only took hold after 30 or 40 days, depending on the sex of the child. It is also from a certain stage of development that the foetus is legally considered to be a person under French law, with all the attributes that this represents.

In fact, all these presuppositions ignore the natural laws of the return to incarnate life. For fertilisation to take place, for a human embryo to form, the presence of the Spirit is essential. The Spirit, totally immaterial, then accompanied by its semi-matter element: the perispirit, which is necessary to integrate matter, will build its body with the genetic material received from its parents. The Spirit is there from the start, and if there is no Spirit, then we are dealing with what is called a clear egg, an agglomerate of flesh, as in nervous pregnancies, the fruit of the wishes and sufferings of certain women who, in their desire for maternity, come to create the same physical signs as in a woman who is really pregnant.

When we talk about abortion, we are inevitably referring to the departure of a spirit and not just a physiological change in a woman.

The spirit that has to leave under these conditions undergoes a form of trauma; we know that the return to matter is already difficult in itself, a source of anguish, and that it requires the help and support of the guide to leave the ethereal life and return to the heavy vibrations of matter. The termination of a pregnancy corresponds to a violent death that provokes a new source of anguish, precipitating the unprepared spirit into a sudden return to the hereafter.

This does not mean making moral judgements or stigmatising women who have recourse to abortion, who are often alone and at a loss when faced with this difficult choice.

Furthermore, in certain cases it is preferable for pregnancies not to be carried to term if the economic, social and family conditions represent a real ordeal for the Spirit in return. In the case of pregnancy renunciation, the resulting distress for the Spirit is out of all proportion to the difficulties to which he or she might be exposed if the pregnancy were to continue. We must also consider cases of rape, in which, this time, it is the man's responsibility that is at stake, and it is unfortunately the woman who takes sole responsibility for deciding whether or not to keep the child.

There have also been many cases of savage infanticide, linked to the denial of pregnancy or maternity, which have been widely publicised in the media, and it is true that in these cases it would have been better if the pregnancies had not been completed.

On the other hand, the spiritist perspective on the reality of pregnancy should lead to a rethinking of the idea that abortion should not be trivialised, that it should not be considered as a means of contraception, which is not the case, just as the abortion pill is not a solution. On the contrary, to limit the number of abortions, we need better information, better advice and better guidance on contraceptive methods, particularly for teenagers and young women. What's more, better support and financial assistance would be welcome for women who are unable to carry a pregnancy to term because they are alone and destitute.

On the other hand, contraception makes it possible to choose the moment when the couple (or the parent) can welcome a child; this Spirit in return will be better received because it is wanted and expected in the happiness and love to be shared.

Contraception makes it possible to live serenely with the sexuality inherent in incarnation, in balance and respect for all.

Birth control

It is not part of the divine plan to create as many children as nature can provide.

Birth control is a good thing, because it is an individual and collective responsibility to ensure decent living conditions for all reincarnating spirits. This control is part of the law of evolution, insofar as our societies must be gradually transformed in the direction of greater well-being for all. The Earthling of the 21st century is no longer the Earthling of the Middle Ages, and limiting the number of births contributes to the harmony and balance of the globe as a whole. We need to offer newly embodied life a future of progress that is no longer a circumstance in which human beings have to struggle to survive in the turmoil of existence.

DISABILITIES AND BIRTH DISEASES

Today's medicine, which is essentially materialistic, treats the body without concern for what animates it, i.e., the spirit. The therapeutic approach is above all scientific and technical, and although sometimes highly sophisticated, it inevitably comes up against the origins of pathologies and the difficulties of providing effective care.

If we take into account the fact that the human being is not just an agglomeration of cells, but first and foremost a spirit who is living a new experience in matter and who carries with him anxieties and dramas experienced in other lives that can have an impact on his mental or physical health, we see medicine differently. The therapies would then be very different, and without underestimating the considerable progress made in all branches of medicine, particularly surgery, a complementary approach could be put in place, responding more closely to the needs and wishes of patients, an attitude that we are already seeing in the development of so-called alternative medicines.

Each incarnate being is the result of three elements:

- a totally immaterial element called Spirit or soul. The Spirit is immortal, pre-existing life and surviving death. It is the seat of intelligence and consciousness, a consciousness that evolves and is refined over the course of the many incarnate existences that the spirit must go through to reach perfection.
- a physical body that the Spirit creates at conception from the genetic material of its parents, a new body each time it returns to matter.
- Between the soul and the physical body, there is a semi-material element, the perispirit, which enables the totally immaterial Spirit to integrate matter. This element has a memorising role: it records in its cells everything that the Spirit has experienced since its origin, its emotions, its learning, its feelings, its traumas and its suffering.

At the moment of reincarnation, the Spirit enters matter through its perispirit. In this return to the flesh, as it approaches the heavy vibrations of matter, the Spirit may unconsciously imprint a more or less significant previous suffering, which may take the form of a malformation or a physical or psychological malaise.

Here are a few illnesses or disabilities for which we have obtained explanations from doctors in the afterlife:

Down syndrome

In a spiritist séance, a Spirit who had been a young girl with Down syndrome in her last life, explained that in her previous life she had died of lightning meningitis and

had wished to return quickly to Earth to continue her evolution. Overriding the advice of her guide, who warned her of the risks of a hasty return to the flesh, she was reincarnated.

Here's what he had to say:

"During the process of incarnation, as I approached the vibrations of matter, my double perisprital made me relive my last moments of my previous incarnation; I felt great pain in my head and fell into a profound confusion. I identified myself with a ball that was about to explode.

When I woke up in my mother-to-be's womb, my double had been imprinted with images of my disorder, and the process had become irreversible. My previous meningitis was being projected into the present, both onto my double and onto my new genetic heritage: Down syndrome had been programmed".

Rheumatoid arthritis

This condition corresponds to a history of mutilation or torture. Psychotherapy may be indicated after a Spirit has provided information about the circumstances of each case. A journey into the past under hypnosis could also be envisaged to eliminate the cause of this illness once and for all, but this is not a simple process and requires good skills on the part of the hypnotist.

Epilepsy

This pathology has two essential causes: one is the result of a trauma experienced in a past life. The hypnotic process to lead the subject to the source of the shock is the right therapeutic indication. The other is a genetic cause, and here the action is more delicate. Fluidic chains directed at the patient could relax, calm and reduce the frequency of attacks. We can also use magnetism and herbal solutions indicated by the spirit doctors of the afterlife. There are also two mediumistic sculptures charged with a particular fluid by the posthumous author that have calming virtues, one of which can stop the crisis at its touch.

Hemiplegia

Here is a message explaining the causes of hemiplegia and treatment options:

"The first cause of hemiplegia lies in the complexity of the incarnation process, since the perispirit cells as a whole are not always fully developed. As long as the thought of the reincarnated spirit requires relatively little work from the cerebral matter, this lack of development will not present major inconveniences. A man who has reached maturity is a spirit who makes greater demands on his brain, and it is then that illness will arise suddenly. Imagine a man's brain being irrigated in one of its hemispheres by the venous system of a twelve-year-old child.

The second cause has to do with the very nature of the reincarnating spirit. The feelings of fear and anxiety associated with the idea of rejection cause a perisprital imbalance that leads to a network of spasms throughout the brain, resulting in a hemiplegic accident.

The best treatment will consist of recreating the conditions of incarnation at the moment of intra-uterine life by placing the subject in a conscious regression following the technique of hypnosis. Spiritual healers and magnetisers can only intervene at this stage of regression.

Profound mental debility

This pathology corresponds to beings who have never lived on planet Earth. The modification of the perispiritual form and structure did not take place in the afterlife. *"It is therefore necessary to undertake work in the afterlife to mitigate these sudden returns. At the present time, medical knowledge on the earthly plane cannot provide answers, yet the spirit lives, is present and carries its feelings within it. In such cases, almost at birth, it would be necessary to envisage telepathic action, fluidic action and protogenesis (the action of thought on living matter to reconstruct damaged, malformed or injured cellular tissue). As you can already guess, we're a long way from the mark, and we can only join you in expressing our sadness at such situations.*

Multiple sclerosis

Here is a general explanation given in a message:

"When the spirit is reincarnated, it must accept the process of condensation of matter, which it will have to mould in some way to its idea. When the spirit leaves this globe at the moment of death, the reflex of anguish most often imposes itself because it is heading for a destiny that is unknown to it. When the spirit is reincarnated, the process remains the same, and is even worse. In spite of its strength, the spirit will find a body that is very alien to its true (spiritual) nature, and which may not condense well within the flesh. The process will declare itself sooner or later.

An adapted therapy of the hereafter can make it possible to stop the pathology. An experiment on the case of a Spiritist suffering from this disease and already having disabling effects, enabled us to observe that it was possible to obtain a cure. Admittedly, this is a unique case for the moment, but we have observed that fifteen years after the spiritual treatments for the disease, this person no longer experienced any of the symptoms of multiple sclerosis.

Blindness from birth

There is no single source of blindness.

First of all, in the past, punctured or burnt eyes may have left a trauma at the perispiritual level, which could produce an incomplete organisation of the material at the time of the return to the flesh and the development of the embryo. In such cases, protogenesis could complete an incomplete job.

Blindness can also be caused by a too abrupt transposition from another planet to planet Earth. The very form of the double must find in the invisible a time of adaptation for a new body in a new world. This time is not always respected. Hypnosis could be of invaluable help. It would then be necessary to teach the Spirit from elsewhere to grow correctly within its new envelope by making it relive the moments of its reincarnation.

Autism

The origin of the autistic manifestation is not physical but spiritual insofar as the incarnation can, in the difficulty of entering into carnal genetics, provoke an accident or incident.

In some cases, the child's surrogate mother may have experienced, during her gestation period, a series of aggressive elements that may have interacted with the spirit of the future child, which would partly explain this later manifestation of altered human behaviour.

This Spirit, in turn, curls up in matter, in its carnal prison, temporarily prevented from expressing itself. It cannot formulate its true thoughts, but it remains a spirit that wants nothing more than to live and be happy. It thinks, dreams, hopes, loves and needs love. Its perispiritual double is eager to express a thought, a vocabulary that has already been recorded. But the autistic person does not understand his nature, is afraid of his humanity and escapes his reality by no longer responding to his real world.

Following the advice of the Spirits, since 1993 we have been taking action involving several people: a clairvoyant who carries out a past life reading relating to the trauma that led to the autistic disorder, if this is the case; five telepsychists who carry out a weekly task consisting of directing constructed thoughts towards the autistic person, which makes it possible to externalise a fluid, an energy, a force that will be received by the recipient; and finally a hypnotist who, also carrying out a weekly task, strives to reach the spirit of the autistic person in its unconscious depths. For several years now, this group has been dedicated to this mission.

At present, three autistic children are being cared for; progress is being made, even if we have not yet achieved full self-expression for all of them. Naturally, we include the extra-spiritual, multi-disciplinary contributions that are part of this improvement, in the sum total of everything that can contribute to a better well-being, it being understood that the parental, educational and social attitude also has a role to play in the progress of the therapy.

A spiritual approach to our illnesses, and in particular to rare diseases, would undeniably improve our well-being. Knowing that a person living on Earth is not born to life at the moment of their earthly birth, but that they return after other incarnations charged with emotions, suffering and trauma, and that the return to matter often provokes anguish that can have repercussions on their physical and mental well-being, is a game-changer. If the medical and scientific world were more receptive to this approach, we could avoid campaigns to combat certain illnesses or disabilities, which mobilise a great deal of energy and financial resources without providing any immediate solutions.

We also need to rehabilitate different therapies that are little-known or even despised, such as magnetism, or hypnosis, which is often ill-regarded, even though it is a method that allows us to reach the deepest levels of the mind, to go back to the genesis of the body and the origin of the illnesses, phobias and anxieties that are still the lot of many Earthlings.

EDUCATION

It is a major issue at the heart of the concerns of all societies in all periods of humanity, a subject that is more or less well understood and dealt with, but which cannot escape any human organisation, since these children who are born every day need to be brought up and educated, to become the adults and decision-makers of tomorrow.

Human life, and consequently children's lives, have not always held the same place in society. In ancient times, when infant mortality was very high, life expectancy was low and children were born without necessarily being wanted, they were not the object of so much attention, except perhaps in aristocratic and royal circles where the survival of the bloodline was linked to the maintenance of power and property.

Centuries later, we find ourselves in a society where there are fewer births in Western countries, where children are desired, expected and sometimes the source

of too much individualistic attention. The era of the abused child has been succeeded by the era of the child king, at the centre of all concerns and solitudes.

Mores evolve with the times and cultures; progress is made in various fields and education is not a homogenous subject across the planet. Living conditions vary from one part of the globe to another, and childhood is not viewed in the same way everywhere as it is in our Western countries. And yet, whatever the country, whatever the time and the context, it is always a question of welcoming a Spirit who is beginning an experience again and who is being handed over to the customs and conditions of a family and a society. The context of the return to life is decisive; education has lifelong consequences and must be treated with the greatest care and respect.

The role of parents

Its approach changed over time and there were major differences and disparities between socio-cultural environments, but overall, children remained subject to the omnipotence of their parents and had to respect the choices they made for them, whether in terms of their professional future or their marital future. In affluent families, children were there to maintain the family fortune, and even make it prosper, by maintaining traditions without deviating from them.

In poor communities, survival was the main concern; feeding the children was a major preoccupation on a daily basis, as education was not a part of upbringing.

The emotional and balancing role of parents, particularly mothers, was not properly understood. In affluent families, children were often entrusted to nannies and there was a lack of understanding of child psychology; children were seen as miniature adults rather than as beings who develop their own psyche and are highly sensitive to their emotional environment.

From the 20th century onwards, the situation was quite different; there was talk of child psychology, the child was placed at the centre of preoccupations, and although significant progress was made under the aegis of educators and psychoanalysts such as Françoise Dolto, at the same time there were drifts and errors, such as that of the child king, the centre of all attention, or that of the resignation of parents, who shifted the role of education onto society.

Knowledge of spiritist laws reminds us of the primordial role of parents in the education of their offspring. Their role is to love, protect, surround and guide.

Here are some indications given during spiritist sessions:

"Never give the child the idea that he could be superior, never flatter him in any way, because then you will give rise to the feeling of pride that he may once have known in another life and which would make him a prisoner for the rest of his life.

Children are neither angels nor demons; they are spirits reincarnated in a physical world and should be treated as such. Never deprive them of the dream they aspire to, don't project onto them what you would like them to be, accept your child, be there just when they need you, like responsible adults. Be aware of your limits, and also have the humility to learn from your child what you don't know and that he knows because he may be more advanced than you. Children are not toys; they are not your things. Respect is also love."

The child who is born is not the narcissistic extension of its parents, a dream child, idealised, coming to fulfil proud hopes or to make up for frustrations suffered.

The child is a Spirit in return, with its own personal history, character and life plans, which may be the opposite of the parents' projections. The child that is born borrows only a physical part from the parent's genetics; the whole psychic part corresponds to

its past lives, its acquisitions, its strengths, its pitfalls, which have nothing to do with genetics. There are remarkable illustrious figures whose descendants are commonplace, even limited, and conversely, there are true geniuses who were born into intellectually underprivileged families.

The role of society

Alongside parental education, the child evolves in a school society represented by educators. Instruction is the determining factor in education, giving pupils the tools, they need to acquire knowledge and learn basic concepts, which also requires good teaching skills on the part of teachers.

This is a very old subject, which was already addressed in ancient Greece with the schools of philosophy. Closer to home, schools in France are associated with the name of Charlemagne, and above all with that of Jules Ferry, who made education compulsory and free when it was provided in state schools. For a long time, education was reserved for the elite and for boys, and was mainly provided by religious orders. Today, in accordance with the laws on secularism, it is the State's responsibility to ensure that every child receives the education he needs for his own fulfilment, within an educational framework that must be respected, regardless of who teaches them. And then, today as in the past, the Minister of Education, from reform to reform, in a more or less successful way, is trying to adapt the education system to the changes in our society.

Every era has seen its share of upheavals and contradictions in school systems that were not yet fully developed. As far back as the XVIth century, philosophers such as Montaigne and Rabelais protested against the absolute authority and brutality of the teacher. Later, in the XVIIIth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau advocated greater respect for children, setting out his thoughts in his famous treatise "*Émile ou De l'éducation*" (*Emile or Education*), which served as a basis for reflection for many educationalists. Rejecting excessive punishment and authoritarianism on the part of the teacher, Rousseau proposed an education that would stimulate the child's curiosity while respecting his or her personality, helping the child to recognise his or her weaknesses and strengths so that he or she could progress in close contact with the natural environment around him or her.

Later, the Swiss educationalist Henri Pestalozzi would take up these concepts. In the school he founded in Yverdon, whose doors he opened to the poorest, he proposed a form of teaching in which he placed the child at the heart of the action, making him the author of his own learning by observing the natural environment, by encouraging him to ask questions about the world around him, and by enabling him gradually to discover and learn the various disciplines essential to his education. He was a forerunner in many areas: multi-level classes, teaching cycles, differentiated teaching and bilingual teaching.

Hippolyte Rivail, who later became Allan Kardec, the founder of spiritism, attended Pestalozzi's school and in turn became a modern and attentive pedagogue who wrote several innovative treatises on education.

Other schools offer teaching methods that differ from those imposed by the state, such as the Montessori school, the Steiner Waldorf school and the Decroly school. While there are differences in the way they are organised, what they all have in common is respect for the child as he or she learns and acquires new skills. We find an awareness of the world, of nature, and an awakening through the practice of disciplines wrongly considered as minor, such as music, the plastic arts and sport. This means that imparting knowledge alone is not enough.

The spirit of Pestalozzi has manifested itself in this way:

"Education must have all the virtues of spontaneity and freedom; the child is like an extinguished wick that only needs to be relit. Parents can be the essential factor in this new light, this different light; their responsibility is as great as the responsibility of the entire social body.

We must, therefore, know how to surround the child's nature with an intelligent love, that is to say, a love that does not embrace to the point of suffocation, but that gradually helps the spirit to discover its true nature in the light of its new incarnation".

Shared education and instruction are the subject of much disagreement. Some feel that the education system is too rigid and not child-centred, while others advocate learning from reality and free choice. Teachers also note and deplore the attitude of some parents who, in this educational process, range from indifference to total abandonment of their role.

Even if some education systems represent real progress, none of them takes into account the intrinsic nature of the child, who comes back with not only achievements but also wounds, suffering and difficulties. There are huge differences between children, and these differences are not just linked to socio-cultural background, even if it is clear that children from poor families have more difficulties than others. We need to rethink the school system, adapting it as closely as possible to each child, respecting their speed of acquisition, without stigmatising or implicitly excluding those who do not progress like the others, but who can develop other skills. We need to diversify the levels of education, and not guide on the basis of overly restrictive and often elitist criteria. It would be desirable for access to education that is well adapted to today's requirements to be a priority in public policy, because educational and intellectual indigence, lack of knowledge and reference points, are a springboard for all kinds of turpitude and drift towards dangerous, even criminal, behaviour.

Admittedly, adapting to all kinds of problems, diversifying teaching, reducing class sizes, recruiting teachers trained in new teaching methods and paying them with dignity all represent a cost, but these efforts are essential if society is to progress and offer the spirits who are reincarnated favourable living conditions in which to evolve. Similarly, it is important to appreciate the financial and cultural difficulties faced by some parents, and to help them overcome their shortcomings so that each child can develop in a fulfilling family environment. Here too, there is a significant cost, a need to raise awareness, to change patterns in different directions; these are long-term investments. Educated, fulfilled children, protected from addictions and aberrations of all kinds, will be responsible and committed adults in society, capable of changing the machinery and fulfilling the mission for which they have been reincarnated.

Nelson Mandela said: *"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world, a weapon to combat the intolerance and racism that thrive in our societies, a weapon to break down prejudice, a weapon to denounce the injustices of this world".*

Unfortunately, large sums of money have been or are still being spent on national defence, on war and therefore on destruction - sums that are often greater than those allocated to the education and happiness of tomorrow's adults.

ORGAN DONATIONS

Organ donation has become possible thanks to advances in medicine. Organs that have not been altered by age or disease, such as the heart, lungs, liver and corneas, are removed from people who have often died accidentally. The "donors" sometimes remain in a state of coma, deliberately maintained in order to be able to harvest vital

organs. This practice has sometimes been criticised, yet it is entirely justified because it can save lives. The overtaken coma, is in truth, the mortal stage, the stage of separation of the perispirit and the spirit from the carnal envelope, and life support is purely artificial. At this stage, the Spirit has emerged from its carnal envelope and is therefore free. The fact that the envelope is artificially maintained in function in no way contradicts spiritist morality.

Organ donation is the ultimate act of love; it enables a person to continue its incarnation by borrowing a physical element from another person who no longer needs it, since they have returned to their afterlife. However, it must be free of charge, and in this respect, we must condemn the shameful practices of certain countries where people, often poor children, donate an organ such as a kidney, in return for a pitiful remuneration in comparison with the suffering endured and the possible consequences.

LIVE GUINEA PIGS USED IN MEDICINE

Therapeutic research sometimes requires tests on living people or animals.

This possibility does not conflict with the ethical or moral requirements that must prevail in medicine and that are imposed on experimenters. Research continues, useful for improving the health and well-being of patients and alleviating pain. Such experiments are justified, provided that people are respected and informed in full knowledge of the facts. However, there are practices in this field that have no justification whatsoever when it comes, in particular, to unnecessary, repeated experiments on animals, with no regard for the suffering caused to them. Anything that goes beyond what is necessary in certain laboratories has no moral justification whatsoever.

CLONING AND GENETIC MANIPULATION

While the cloning of cells is in itself an advance whose consequences can be interesting and salutary, making it possible to cure serious illnesses, certain scientists who are sorcerer's apprentices imagine that we could create superior intelligent beings by intervening in the genetic process of fertilisation, or even by imagining cloning a living being to serve as a standard. These experiments, which are reminiscent of dark moments in our recent history, are purely fanciful, and in terms of Spiritist philosophy, in ignorance of the process of incarnation, there is no reflection on the spiritual consequences of such practices.

The Spirit pre-exists matter; it is the Spirit that creates its body with the genetics at its disposal and from its personality shaped in the course of its past lives. Intelligence cannot be created; it is a characteristic of the Spirit. At the very most, we could find Spirits reincarnating in troubled bodies, instinctively attracted by matter, without any choice of life or consciousness, with the risk of suffering in various ways from this predominance of matter imposed on their souls. As for free spirits who reincarnate in full consciousness and choose their family and their environment, they will obviously not be attracted by this kind of experimentation.

Cloning represents an attack on perispirit matter, which can suffer at the moment of fertilisation, since the future bodily appearance is already programmed, whereas in the natural process, it is the Spirit that imprints the matter of its personality and shape a physical appearance of its own. Cloning is therefore an attack on the meaning of incarnation, an attack on the divine principle of life, which is not simply a random combination of physical cells. Above all, there is the Spirit, whose evolution is the result of a long process that cannot be accelerated; we cannot contradict nature and

suddenly create geniuses, because it is not by manipulating genes that we can make a spirit more intelligent.

MEDICALLY ASSISTED PROCREATION

It is now accepted and authorised in many countries, including France, for men or women to donate sperm or oocytes to other women so that they can procreate and bear a child. This altruistic act used to be reserved for heterosexual couples, but has recently been extended to homosexual women. This practice is normal and healthy insofar as things are done rigorously and disinterestedly, with the sole aim of enabling women to become mothers. It is a noble gesture that must be accepted in a modern society.

SURROGATION

This is the act of a woman carrying the child of another woman who is unable to do so for purely physical reasons, such as the absence of a uterus.

This issue naturally raises many questions and understandable misgivings, and it is only natural that the legislator should be cautious in order to avoid abuses and foreseeable abuses. How can we be sure that the surrogate mother will return the child that is not hers, but with whom she was able to forge a bond through a maternal and telepathic instinct during the pregnancy? Furthermore, how can we be sure that the mother will accept the child that she did not carry, with whom she did not form a bond during pregnancy and who, physically or for other reasons, such as disability or malformation, no longer corresponds to her expectations?

Once again, we must reckon with the moral inferiority of our planet and proceed cautiously on these subjects. However, from the point of view of spiritist morality, this possibility is not shocking in absolute terms. There is no reason to oppose a practice which allows a Spirit to be reincarnated for a particular mission with a chosen mother, but who for purely physical reasons will not be able to receive him. If the act of carrying another's child is a selfless gesture, a testimony to love and humanity, and if there is a bond between the two mothers, there is no obstacle to instituting such practices, which, all things considered, should be limited. But such provisions will probably only be adopted in a few decades' time, when mentalities will have evolved and human morality will accept it.

It is often said that the desire for a child can be satisfied through adoption, and that it is not necessary to have the same genes to love and raise a child. Of course, blood ties are not necessarily a guarantee of love, well-being and harmony. Some children are mistreated by their biological parents and, conversely, we can become very attached to adopted children. However, this reasoning does not yet prevail on Earth where, according to deep-rooted mentalities, it is often necessary to evolve within a restricted and genetically identical family framework.

From a Spiritist point of view, in a world that will have evolved considerably, the current family unit will no longer be necessary when spirits who have come back to life will be considered as the children of an entire society, which will have a collective duty to love and educate them, even if there is no blood link with them.

FREEZING EMBRYOS

This technique, which may be carried out in all good faith and with the aim of doing future parents a favour, is in reality a real imprisonment for the Spirit. For there to be an embryo, for there to be the beginnings of a human body, there must be the presence of the Spirit, the Spirit that returns to matter and shapes its new body.

However, in the process of freezing, the spirit and the perispirit become frozen in the embryonic envelope. The spirit is then imprisoned in a temporary habitat of artificial incorruptibility. This reality, ignored by science, is obviously unacceptable when we understand that all life presupposes the presence of a Spirit. This vital presence is an essential principle of spiritist science, which is still little known even in spiritist circles, when it is sometimes still assumed that the Spirit incarnates later during gestation. We will have to talk about this principle for a long time to come before we can convince science to stop using the process of embryo freezing.

TECHNICITY

Science and technology have developed massively on Earth over the last few decades, revolutionising the world of industry, scientific research, medicine and so on. The Internet has completely changed the world of work, the way people communicate with each other and the world of information. The mastery of energies is undeniable proof of human genius. Of course, technical developments bring with them significant conveniences that should not be criticised.

However, technological progress is not necessarily a factor of happiness; it can even be dangerous if it is developed in anarchy. This is borne out by the "digital dependency" of many people, especially young people, who now communicate only via devices such as smartphones and tablets, who have lots of virtual friends on Facebook, but who don't look at or talk to the people around them. Cybercrime and all kinds of misuse of these new technologies also bear witness to this.

The Spirit's words on this subject:

"Man believed that through the button, the connecting rod, the computer, through essentially material and intermediary forces, he had found the solution to his problem. However, the moral inferiority of the spirits of the Earth predominates and the technicality thus developed is not for the benefit of all, to alleviate misery, but for the good of a few who have become consumers of 'progress', disregarding the laws of nature, sharing and love. The retreat of spirituality has deprived scientific development of any moral sense. As a result, materialism has gradually penetrated people's consciences, and modes of social production have moved away from the indispensable justice evoked by all God's missionaries. All the official representations of human thought have espoused decadent materialism in all its forms. Religion, politics, medicine and art have all succumbed to the law of profit in the denial of their primary function".

Theoretically, the aim of all technology should be the happiness of mankind, but discoverers and scientists have often been conditioned, sometimes imprisoned in a materialistic schema.

Philosophy is not very present when it comes to reflecting on the sciences, and human beings, in their inferiority, have always had an unfortunate tendency to misuse useful discoveries. Alfred Nobel's discovery of dynamite, for example, was used for warlike purposes, and this caused him great regret at the end of his life, prompting him to create a prize to reward those who worked for peace. The same was true of nuclear energy.

The evolution to which we are all invited has both an intellectual and a moral aspect. It's all very well for human beings to use their intellect to discover new processes and new techniques, but if these discoveries are devoid of any moral sense, we could end up creating evil geniuses. That's why the worlds of science, technology and communication should be bound by a code of ethics that protects us from the abuses

and serious risks engendered by innovations that, far from helping human beings, lead to a form of enclosure of their consciences. Morality and sentiment must therefore guide any innovative venture, because the abuses are already there, and enlightened consciences are trying to contain them with great difficulty.

Parents and educators need to be as vigilant as possible, so that the children who are most vulnerable and most adept at handling new objects do not succumb to these new addictions. On the contrary, they need to rediscover a sense of exchange and playful artistic disciplines that awaken and socialise them, rather than limiting them to a passive role as consumers of new technologies whose instigators are often only interested in financial gain.

TOP-LEVEL SPORT

It is beneficial and necessary to maintain one's physical body through regular physical activity; similarly, it is healthy to offer children and teenagers fun and sporting activities, allowing them to play team sports that can develop a sense of relating to others in a form of physical fulfilment that is necessary for their age. High-level sport, on the other hand, should not be encouraged.

Comment from a Spirit: "Nature must not be forced in any way. Under no circumstances must we flatter the main flaw in human nature, namely pride. In no way must we thwart a body which, in truth, inhabits a physical environment that must not be contradicted.

That's why this so-called high-level sport has definite psychological consequences. The person who is speaking to you is more in favour of what he calls "a cerebral sport", i.e., a sport which will have all the moral, psychic and spiritual faculties that can lead to mastery of the carnal envelope and its natural daily maintenance.

It is understood that the muscles of a body, that the nerves of a carnal envelope, must be maintained at all levels and not only at the level of sports maintenance but also at the level of nutrition. The fact remains that the spirit masters matter, and often very poorly, and that maintenance is above all a matter of maintaining the psyche, of working the psyche.

Top-level sport can have disastrous moral consequences. Huge sums of money are spent on sports clubs and matches; huge salaries are offered to sportsmen and women, leading young people to believe that it is easy to earn money without having to learn and work at school. These considerable sums, often supplemented by public subsidies, could be better used to build sports facilities and keep young people busy on their own.

In the same way, the spirit of the Olympic Games is now totally distorted and no longer corresponds to the original ideal of sporting fraternity as imagined by Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Under cover of good feelings, these Games are corrupted by money, established in countries where the construction of the necessary infrastructures is done to the detriment of the needs of the inhabitants, forcing them to assume the repayment of colossal debts. These Games benefit a small part of the population, enriching certain businessmen, while at the same time hunger, misery and inequality reign.

On the contrary, the organisation of these international sporting events should be the embodiment of a peaceful ideal of sharing and human solidarity.

DRUG

The problem of drugs is not new. From time immemorial, people have sought to forget the hardships of life by taking substances that allow them to escape temporarily from their daily lives, to disconnect from the harsh realities of life, to make it more beautiful, or even to relieve physical suffering. This problem is all the more crucial these days because of the large-scale international trafficking that is taking place, particularly via the Internet, and the increasing number of substances on offer. We have moved on from natural drugs to synthetic drugs, where the addition of certain products increases the dependency phenomenon and creates other unfortunate side-effects; but they all have the same purpose: to modify the state of consciousness or improve performance.

There are legal drugs, i.e., drugs that are sold freely, such as alcohol, tobacco, coffee, psychotropic medicines and organic solvents, as well as illegal drugs, the use and sale of which are prohibited. However, the legislation is not the same in all countries, which complicates the fight that governments must wage against this scourge.

Yes, it is a scourge, because a number of accidents, crimes and misdemeanours are committed under the influence of various drugs. It's a public health problem because the regular intake of substances leads to serious pathologies. But above all, the dependence created generates a need for supplies that has financial repercussions, leading the consumer more or less quickly to become a drug dealer.

Moreover, many people are imprisoned for this reason, exposing them to a degrading imprisonment that solves nothing, because trafficking takes place everywhere, including in prison. Secondly, the lack and suffering created by physical dependence led people to try to obtain illicit supplies. Most people incarcerated for this reason would be better off in care units.

International drug trafficking networks exist, such as the Medellin cartel, which was infamous in the 1980s, involving banks, insurance companies and the arms industry, profiting from its activities to launder money. Sectarian movements also profit from and encourage these businesses.

Drug trafficking often goes hand in hand with arms trafficking in certain countries; unfortunate victims get caught up in the game, and if sometimes a jolt of conscience emerges, this conscience is quickly annihilated by the absorption of drugs that are inoculated. These people then become the robots of a great machination, whose main beneficiaries often hold high political office.

The spirit of the Italian philosopher Lanza Del Vasto (1901-1981) expressed himself on this subject: *"Current legislation considers the drug addict not as a patient, not as a sick person, but rather as a culprit who will be implacably prosecuted by the law. There is no real place for prevention of this scourge internally.*

Once again, the party of money, the party of profiteers, the party of the big dealers will win, because it is really and deliberately distorting the problem of drugs to want to make the drug addict the culprit in the circumstances; to think for a single moment that this idea of guilt developed within a law will stop the scourge, is stupidity.

Drugs are a scourge, first and foremost a merchant one; it's a question of trade, nothing more. This trade will continue to feed a certain number of men on the planet, eminently wealthy, their wealth and profit being the result of their absolutely shameless trafficking.

Young people need more information and prevention. The scourge of drugs must be reduced, man must find his way, his path, his happiness, that's obvious. People wait for the absolute, they wait for a better tomorrow, but we mustn't point to that

tomorrow and say: 'You're guilty, I'm going to arrest you, I'm going to put you in prison', when the guilt lies elsewhere".

The issue of legalising certain soft drugs is a recurring one, and one that has been called for by social workers and educators working in the field of drug addiction. This would enable the black market to be broken up and these substances to be offered at reasonable prices, thereby solving the problems of delinquency associated with these addictions. In countries that have legalised cannabis in particular, there has been no increase in consumption, demonstrating that the argument of encouraging consumption within a legal framework does not hold water.

However, while legalisation has partly put an end to the problem of delinquency, the fact remains that the absorption of substances remains harmful in terms of health and balance. One person who succumbed to an overdose testified after his death:

"Cigarettes, syringes and tablets are no substitute for courage. These products can sometimes enable us to see life differently. With a large magnifying glass, they can colour life, draw life, make it more beautiful, happier for just a few minutes, just a few hours, just long enough to believe that we are better off, that everything is beautiful, that everything is truer.

But it's not true, it's totally not true; it's a lie and it's the worst kind of lie because it's a lie that kills, destroys, gnaws away, it's a lie that destroys consciousness. You mustn't lose yourself in drugs.

To help others, you have to be yourself. But the poison of drugs prevents people from being themselves. It takes away his identity, his personality, his character, his psychology. The drug addict is not a free being, he is against freedom because he accepts dependence".

To prevent young people from being tempted to take drugs, we need to provide better education, take better account of the difficulty of reincarnating on our slow-moving planet, and propose a more authentic, fairer society where real values are rediscovered, replacing the artificial power of money and fame.

Chapter 3

THE DIFFERENT POLITICAL REGIMES

In order to design the society of the future, we need to make an assessment of what exists and what has already existed in terms of organisation of societies. We need to look back at history and define the different political models, with their qualities, defects and contradictions. This will involve the emergence of democracies, powers and counter-powers, and the separation of powers. It is also necessary to examine what a constitution is, and it is that of the Vth Republic in France that is evoked here to give one example among others.

So here is a summary of the different models of political organisation based on the emergence of democracy, models which have often enabled societies to make some progress, but which clearly remain inadequate in the face of the challenges of building a future with greater citizen participation.

PRINCIPLES AND GENERALITIES

A political system is defined by a custom in a feudal or theocratic world, or by a constitution in a democratic state. In a democracy, there is a separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers, and citizens are given freedom of choice through the ballot paper. Several political parties may coexist and oppose each other, with representatives in assemblies whose decision-making capacity varies according to the majorities and the type of system, which may be parliamentary, presidential or mixed, i.e., both.

In addition to customary regimes (such as the royalty of yesteryear) and the democratic regimes in which we live today, there are also totalitarian or dictatorial regimes.

The characteristics of totalitarian regimes

These are political regimes whose representatives have taken office either by force, revolution or voting.

These authoritarian regimes control all areas of free speech, including the media and cultural and intellectual expression. They can put everything to do with private life, family, leisure and work under surveillance, especially when it comes to opponents who may represent a challenge that could destabilise them. This gives rise to suspicions and denunciations on the part of those who support the regime, hoping for opportunities and privileges for good services rendered.

Totalitarian regimes have an ideology that is set up as the official truth, a homogenous ideology based on a few principles to which citizens must conform in order to build the new man, who must no longer resemble at all the man of the past. This type of regime obviously corresponds to what Nazism was and, in a different way, what Stalinism was.

For specialists, there is a difference between a totalitarian state and an authoritarian state. For example, they believe that the Latin American dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s had an authoritarian vocation, with the army seizing power, no longer in the service of a precise ideology, but in this case to subjugate populations who wanted a change of system. This was something that the big brother, the United States, could not tolerate, given the economic domination it was perpetuating in South America.

THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL, EMERGENCE AND HISTORY

The emergence of democracy in Athens

Democracy was born in ancient Greece (Vth and IVth centuries BC). In Athens, philosophical thought led to a political experiment in reform under Solon, Pisistratus and Clisthenes, within a democratic system that was strengthened by Ephialtes and Pericles.

It is a form of direct democracy in which decisions concerning the city (*polis*) belong to the citizens. Women, slaves and foreigners (*métèques*) are excluded from citizenship. Although the system of election existed, it was replaced by the random draw to appoint magistrates. The men who regularly took part in the General Assembly of the people (*ecclesia*) were directly involved in decision-making.

It was Pericles who best symbolised Athenian democracy, with decision-making power vested in the *ecclesia*, the assembly of the people, which referred matters to the *boulê* (senate) for debate and prior opinion. The people (*dêmos*) also had a duty to supervise the magistrates in the performance of their duties.

The city's main magistrates were the strategists, who held executive power. There is also the *Heliæus*, a people's court made up of six thousand *Heliasts* chosen by random draw, who judge most cases.

Athenian citizens were therefore entitled to take part in the city's assemblies and make decisions; they could sit in court, be members of the *boulê* and hold office as magistrates at least once in their lives. To make this equality of rights effective, Pericles granted an allowance for participation in civic life, the *misthos*.

With regard to social and economic inequalities, the richest citizens were entrusted with duties known as *liturgies*, and they took on a system of voluntary mutual aid for the most disadvantaged.

Powers in the Middle Ages

In medieval Europe, democratic principles were little developed, except in several monastic communities or in certain towns or communes, particularly in Flanders and Italy.

Although representative assemblies already existed at national level, they met at the King's pleasure. In particular, there is the Parliament in England, the Cortes in Spain and the États Généraux in France. But it was only the English assemblies that had real power under Magna Carta of 1215, when Parliament had to give its consent to taxes.

It was in the EIGHTEENTH century, with the philosophers of the Enlightenment, that the ideas of a democratic ideal based on equality, freedom and inalienable natural rights emerged. These ideas came to fruition during the French Revolution with the abolition of the privileges of the "ancien regime" and *the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789*, which proclaimed that "men are born and remain free and equal in law".

England in the 17th century was the precursor of a democratic regime.

The Habeas Corpus Act (1679) and the *Bill of Rights* (1689) were the first formulations of democratic freedoms. They speak of freedom as a natural right and of

a contract with the people. It was at this time that Great Britain established its first parliamentary system, whose institutions became a model.

The Age of Enlightenment

In his work "*De l'esprit des lois*" (1748), Montesquieu, a philosopher of the Age of Enlightenment, laid the foundations of democracy by insisting on the separation of powers at a time when it was already necessary to consider reducing royal prerogatives.

So-called universal laws must be supported by reason and scientific analysis in order to ensure security and freedom. This is the meaning of "*L'esprit des lois*" according to Montesquieu, who defines freedom as obedience to the laws in a statement that can be summed up as follows: "Liberty is the right to do whatever the laws allow, not to do whatever one wants." He therefore defines freedom in terms of its relationship with the law and with the State, which is itself governed by the law.

This concept is also found in Rousseau's *Social Contract*. *However, he had a preference for direct democracy, i.e. a form of democracy in which the people are sovereign, with each of the individuals who make up the people holding a piece of power. It is then a general will that can be expressed by universal suffrage, and the democratic rule will thus be that of the majority. But Rousseau is also aware that direct democracy would require citizens to be virtuous, acting for the common good in accordance with the general will; this would have to be backed up by a programme of political education for citizens. And realistically, he concludes: "If there were a people of gods, they would govern themselves democratically. Such perfect government is not suited to men.*

The democratic experiments that would emerge in the West would depart from this concept, which was inapplicable to large States, and even today we are still dependent on a representative democracy, so dear to Montesquieu, but not satisfactory if we talk of a *sovereign people*.

If we look at the rest of history, it was Montesquieu's conception that prevailed, with the famous separation of powers - legislative, executive and judicial - to prevent abuses of power. It is by this means that the freedom of the citizen and public authority can be reconciled to a certain extent.

Democracy began to be applied at the end of the XVIIIth century, when the English colonies of North America revolted and emancipated themselves, giving rise to the *Bill of Rights* of 1776, which served as the basis for the democratic Constitution of the United States. The French Revolution of 1789 overthrew the monarchy and proclaimed the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. These two revolutions marked the beginning of new regimes: the first republics, which led to an improvement in the right to vote.

Throughout the 19th century, democracy continued to be sought by liberals, who were concerned with rights, legality and freedoms in the political sphere, but incapable of advancing democracy in the economic and social spheres.

The political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) analysed American society in *About Democracy in America* (1835-1840). He presented a liberal conception of democratic development and the gradual disappearance of inequalities. In his view, democracy should correspond to the evolution of society as a whole and its values. He called this historical process the "equalisation of conditions", based on the following three principles:

- equal rights: all citizens are subject to the same legal rules.
- equal opportunities: social positions are open to all on the basis of merit and regardless of social origin.
- Equality of consideration: each citizen sees himself as the equal of another, even if his economic and social position is different. It is therefore a state of mind, the central value of democratic societies.

The thought of Plato and Aristotle

Let's return to Athenian philosophy and the debate between Plato and his former pupil Aristotle, the former advocating a certain aristocracy and the latter a true democracy. Their philosophical reflections raised the question of the best political system. A number of dialogues by Plato (*The Republic* or *The Politics*) and Aristotle (*The Politics*) deal in depth with this question. Their works address the following questions: What is man? What is the essence of humanity? What is a just regime? How should it be organised? Who should govern? What is knowledge? Who has the skills, the political art?

It is in the answers to these questions that we see two very different visions which, in reality, concern the very nature of the human being.

For Plato, there are three parts to being: one is desires and instincts, and is made up of desires; the second represents courage, the heart, the pursuit of noble action; and the third is intelligence. And depending on the diversity of people, these attributes are not equally distributed, some being closer to material concerns and others more loving and intelligent.

As for Aristotle, he envisaged no discrimination in terms of reason, which all human beings are endowed with, including barbarians. For him, "*man is a rational animal*", but also a social being, weak in his solitude, who therefore needs to live in a political community (polis).

For Plato, difference is inherent to humanity, while Aristotle envisages natural equality between individuals.

For Plato, the three parts of man (needs, heart, knowledge) define three social classes. The first is the peasants, craftsmen and tradesmen who organise domestic life. The second is the class of warriors, distinguished by their bravery. The third was made up of philosophers, the holders of knowledge. In this hierarchy of social classes, the philosophers had to run the city, the warriors had to defend it and the people had to feed it.

This is Plato's notion of a just society, a society where everyone has its place.

For Aristotle, who attributed the same ability to reason to everyone, society was limited to two classes, the rich and the poor. Aristotle made no distinction in terms of skills, and envisaged a more collective power by involving the poor in governance in a democracy of equal political rights, based on government of each by all and of all by each.

In Plato's case, the ideal regime was an aristocracy of knowledge and reason, based on an elitist principle. As for Aristotle, he can be seen as the distant precursor of universal suffrage, for example.

The extension of the liberal model

In a liberal democratic system, the Constitution guarantees fundamental freedoms and the separation of powers. The various parties can express themselves and take part in elections governed by universal suffrage. There are procedures for revising

the Constitution, as well as for monitoring the constitutionality of laws and electoral consultations.

In most European countries, universal suffrage was introduced in the first half of the XXth century, although women's right to vote came late, at different dates in different countries. As far as pluralist and liberal democracy in Europe is concerned, it is worth noting the unfortunate parentheses of fascism: Italy and Nazi Germany, as well as the authoritarian regimes in Spain and Portugal. And in Eastern Europe, communist regimes claiming to be "people's" socialist democracies were established.

The emergence of socialist democracy

In the wake of the industrial revolutions of the 19th century, changes in economic life worsened the material conditions of working people. This led to the development of social, political and trade union movements, leading to a global and radical critique of the principles of liberal democracy through socialism.

In his work *Capital*, Karl Marx, in his analysis of the working-class condition, highlights the fact that democracy has not been able to prevent the exploitation of man by man. Democratic regimes are thus seen as instruments of domination by one class over another. For Marxism, the state remains the product of class antagonism, an instrument of oppression in the hands of the possessing class. It is through the abolition of classes and the disappearance of the state that true democracy could exist.

From the creation of the UN to the post-Cold War era

On 10 December 1948, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. This was followed in 1966 by two Covenants, one on civil and political rights and the other on economic, social and cultural rights.

The *European Convention on Human Rights* was signed in Rome on 4 November 1950.

In the East, the countries of Central Europe were subservient to the Soviet Union, politically and economically, under so-called "totalitarian" regimes because any opposition party could no longer survive, being deemed subversive.

It was in this context that the concept of the "Cold War" between the Eastern bloc and the Western democracies was invented. China, for its part, underwent a revolution, as did a number of developing countries.

This ideological confrontation between East and West came to an end in Eastern Europe in 1989 and ended with the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. Political pluralism was re-established, along with liberalism based on Western European models. However, under the guise of democracy and economic freedom, authoritarian regimes remained, particularly in Russia.

Democracy in a liberal system

In all Western democracies, the powers born of universal suffrage are confronted by opposition forces represented by opposing political parties and trade unions. Plurality of opinion is expressed in legislative assemblies, but also in civil society through associations, corporate pressure groups and even lobbies. Some groups, such as trade unions, can represent a real counter-power insofar as the government in power may be forced to negotiate with them and thus change its policy.

The organisation of our modern States in the XXth century has led to greater complexity in governance, involving a larger administration, with greater technocratic power, made up of experts who influence the decision-making process.

The evolution of democratic society is also characterised by a reduction in the political participation of citizens, due in part to the fall of mobilising ideologies, which is in turn accompanied by a crisis in the legitimacy of political institutions. This "democratic deficit" is often remedied by greater personalization of power.

The serious difficulties facing liberal democracies at the start of the 21st century call for a rethink of the balance needed between individual freedom and solidarity among citizens.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

As Abraham Lincoln put it, democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people; it enables the people to govern themselves, unlike monarchy and aristocratic governments. To guarantee democracy and protect citizens against arbitrary government, it is necessary to separate the powers of government, as advocated by Montesquieu. The legislature is responsible for passing laws, the executive for implementing them and the judiciary for ensuring that they are complied with. Democracy can be exercised directly, in this case direct democracy, or through representatives, in this case indirect democracy.

Direct democracy

This is popular sovereignty according to Rousseau. It is a very ancient model, examples of which can be found in primitive societies, but it was in Athens that this system took shape, based on the fundamental principles of equality of all before the law, access for all to honours and public functions, and the right for all to speak before the courts and the assembly of the people. To enable the poorest citizens to exercise power, Pericles granted parliamentary allowances to all.

This type of democracy is only possible under very specific conditions, in small towns or as part of a local exercise of power, but is difficult to apply in a modern state. Examples can be found in the seventeenth century in New England, in the form of *Town meetings*, where the population of the communes met in assembly to decide on laws, taxes and budgets. More ephemeral experiments took place during the Revolution of 1789, during the Paris Commune in 1871, in Mexico in the Chiapas regions where the Zapatista movement initiated an experiment in social and political transformation, or in 1917 during the Russian Revolution with the election of soviets. Today, this model survives in some Swiss cantons through the *Landsgemeinden*.

The decision-making procedures associated with direct democracy are referendums, popular initiative referendums and petitions. Elected representatives can be removed from office.

When it comes to the economic sphere of production, the idea of direct democracy is associated with that of self-management, examples of which can be found in the workers' councils in Germany and Italy at the beginning of the 20th century, and in Hungary in 1956.

This system has often been advocated by anarchists and libertarians.

Indirect or representative democracy

In an indirect democracy, citizens freely elect representatives who are then responsible for making laws, and sometimes even executing them; this is the case, for example, with judges in the United States. This is the most widespread form of representative democracy in the world. Sometimes, however, not all those who are empowered are elected by the people: in France, for example, members of the government are appointed by the Head of State.

Democratic representativeness is ensured by three main principles:

- Freedom of suffrage guaranteed by the secrecy of the vote, as opposed to a show of hands.

- Equal suffrage: all citizens have the right to vote and each citizen counts as one vote.

- Freedom to stand as a candidate: any citizen who enjoys his or her civic rights and meets the age requirements may stand as a candidate for election as a representative of the people.

In France, unlike in the United States, judges are not elected but are civil servants recruited by competitive examination.

In practice, these two types of democracy coexist: this is a **semi-direct** democracy in which citizens are called upon to decide for themselves by means of a referendum. The proposal may emanate from representative institutions or be initiated by citizens: this is the popular initiative referendum, which applies in Switzerland and Italy in particular.

In France, since the constitutional revision of 28 March 2003, citizens have been able to make use of their right to petition and vote on local reform through local referendums, on a specific subject falling within the remit of a local authority.

The ways in which power is organised and exercised in a democracy can be divided into two main types of system: the parliamentary system and the presidential system.

The parliamentary system is based on the special relationship between three main players:

- Parliament, elected by the people, exercises legislative power (drafting and voting on laws). It gives its confidence to the government to carry out its executive function.

- The government, made up of people chosen to manage a ministerial portfolio, exercises executive power by ensuring that the laws are applied through the administration. The government is accountable to parliament. It is often established or dismissed by a vote of confidence from the same parliament. It is this relationship that characterises the parliamentary system.

- The head of state may be a king or a president. His role is limited to representing the country abroad and he cannot act without the agreement of the government, which is itself accountable to parliament.

The presidential system

We find the same bodies as in the parliamentary system, a parliament which exercises the legislative function, a government composed of the president himself, elected by the citizens or indirectly by a college of electors themselves elected by the citizens as in the United States; the government is therefore not responsible to parliament, but to the citizens. It exercises executive power, surrounded by its own administration. This administration is distinct from the State administration because it only exists during the presidential term of office. The government is accountable only to the President.

Parliamentary and presidential systems have varied from country to country, and some have introduced features of both systems, known as **semi-presidential or mixed** systems, as in France and Finland.

This is the case in the Vth French Republic, in which the Head of State is elected by direct universal suffrage; he appoints the members of the government, prime minister, ministers and secretaries of state and dismisses them. Parliament, which represents the nation, is made up of the National Assembly, made up of deputies elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year term, and the Senate, made up of senators elected by indirect universal suffrage for a six-year term. Parliament votes on laws proposed by its members or by the government. Legislation is shuttled between the two chambers for examination and possible amendments, but it is the National Assembly that has the power to vote on the final text. The President of the Republic may dissolve the Assembly, but the Assembly, like the Senate, can only challenge the government by means of a motion of censure. If the President has not a parliamentary majority, he is forced to *cohabit*, thereby losing the effectiveness of his power to an opposition government.

Liberal democracy

The various regimes, mentioned above, operate within the framework of a liberal democracy, a political doctrine that aims to limit the powers of the state with regard to individual freedoms. It is generally framed by a constitution that emphasises the protection of individual rights and freedoms and is exercised within the framework of a state governed by the rule of law, where representatives are elected by the people. In France, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789) and the preamble to the various constitutions guarantee individual freedoms. Bodies such as the “Conseil Constitutionnel” and the CNIL “(*National Commission for Information Technology and Civil Liberties*)” are set up to ensure that laws and citizens' freedoms are respected.

Fundamental freedoms are guaranteed, such as freedom of conscience, religion, expression, the press, assembly and association. The various political currents have the right to be represented; likewise, the right of movement and property as well as freedom of commerce and free trade are guaranteed.

Citizenship

In ancient times, a citizen was someone who enjoyed the rights of the city; in more modern times, these are the civil and political rights granted to legal nationals of a State. The right to vote is one of the essential components of these rights. This right has varied greatly over time, first being granted to the elite, then to those who could pay the tax (the “*cens*”) reserved for men. In modern democracies, it is now extended to all adult citizens, men and women, who have not been stripped of their civic rights. However, it is rarely accessible to foreign residents in modern democratic countries, except sometimes for local elections.

True democracy is one in which everyone can express their aspirations, whether as individuals or as a group of citizens. The reality is that some categories of citizens are not represented, or are poorly represented, in national or local bodies: women, blue-collar workers and white-collar workers, for example.

As far as women are concerned, France has introduced parity between men and women to ensure equal representation.

To remedy this state of affairs, some people are proposing democracy by drawing lots, so that matters affecting the life of the city are not just the concern of specialists who, often well-placed in the social sphere, may enjoy certain advantages or be out of touch with the realities of citizens' lives. Drawing lots would allow all social categories to be represented. In France, only juries are drawn from the electoral roll.

Chapter 4

COLONISATION AND DECOLONISATION

The former colonies, most of which were African countries, gained their independence in the 1960s, often establishing authoritarian regimes led by presidents for life.

The colonisation of Africa by a number of European states began in the 19th century, led mainly by two great powers, France and England, which shared nearly thirty states between them. However, after around a century of domination, Africa in the 1960s found itself in a context of independence, such as that granted to Morocco and Tunisia in 1956, or that of British Ghana, proclaimed by Kwam Nkrumah in 1957. New freedom throughout the continent did not immediately lead to emancipatory democracies, but rather to the rise of corrupt dictators who came to power through coups d'état. These were often authoritarian and arbitrary regimes supported by the army, one man or a group of men.

The colonial empires gradually disappeared between 1945 and 1975, some in a peaceful process and others in dramatic conditions.

While decolonisation had raised great hopes for developing countries, it has to be said that a few decades later these hopes have been dashed, both in terms of economic growth and democratic advances that are still awaited.

THE CONTEXT OF DECOLONISATION

The desire for independence

It was during the inter-war period that anti-colonial nationalist movements emerged, driven by an elite that had often trained in Europe. The demands were for freedom and emancipation for peoples who were subjugated by the colonisers and lacked fundamental citizenship rights. Moreover, the exploitation of resources essentially met the economic and industrial needs of the metropolises. This led to the emergence of independence parties, sometimes close to anti-imperialist communism. After the Second World War, the UN, created in 1945, voted for the principle of "the right of colonies to administer themselves", while the United States affirmed the principle of "the right of peoples to self-determination", and the Soviet Union denounced "the imperialism of the capitalist powers". The colonial powers, in particular the United Kingdom and France, had to consider decolonisation processes.

Asia shows the way to emancipation

After trying to hold on to India, the British had to give in and then negotiate in the face of the independence movement led by Gandhi and Nehru. India gained independence in 1947, but a religious conflict between Hindus and Muslims led to its partition into two states: the Indian Union and Pakistan. The same year, Burma (now Myanmar) and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) became independent.

Elsewhere in Asia, attempts at independence were thwarted by the expansion of communism under the influence of the USSR and China. After the Indochina War between France and the Vietminh from 1945 to 1954, there was a long period of American intervention, with tragic episodes of warfare, which ended in 1973.

Decolonisation in Africa

After granting independence to the Tunisian and Moroccan protectorates in 1956, France was confronted with the independence parties of the Black African colonies, which successively acquired their negotiated independence under the presidency of General De Gaulle between 1958 and 1960. On the other hand, it was more difficult to give up Algeria, which had the special status of a French department, with a million colonists of metropolitan origin. Conflicts over independence began in 1954 and ended, after many dramatic episodes, in 1962 with the Evian agreements, which paved the way for independence by referendum.

While most African states won their independence through peaceful negotiation, this was not the case on the British side, where many white settlers had settled. In Kenya in 1952, the Mau Mau revolt was harshly repressed, and it was only after a long anti-colonial war that the country gained its independence in 1963. As for South Africa, its independence conferred power on whites, perpetuating flagrant inequalities against blacks under the apartheid regime between 1948 and 1991. The Portuguese colonies did not become independent until 1975.

THE DIFFICULTY OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSITIONS

Political instability hinders the establishment of democracy

There was little support for the independence process, and the liberated populations found themselves faced with a democratic incapacity, when the powers were very quickly monopolised by liberators who turned into dictators. Moreover, the borders determined arbitrarily during the colonial era took no account of ethnic, linguistic or religious differences. This has led to constant conflict since the declarations of independence.

The first years of independence, marked by political unrest, frequently led to the creation of dictatorial regimes, sometimes supported by the former metropolises, which retained control over the exploitation of natural resources. France in particular bears a heavy responsibility in this respect.

Other decolonised countries, such as India, have succeeded in becoming lasting democracies.

However, it is difficult to build a nation in a country where several ethnic groups sometimes coexist. Some countries try to free themselves from their colonial past by creating regional nationalist movements such as pan-Arabism (union of Arab countries) or pan-Africanism (union of African countries). Others, such as Cuba and Vietnam, chose the path of revolutionary communism.

And yet there is immense hope when the former colonised countries see their independence in terms of prosperity and fairness.

The Third World is struggling to assert itself on the international stage

The new states, dreaming of breaking their ties with the former colonisers, want to assert themselves in international relations.

In 1952, the French demographer Alfred Sauvy coined the term "Third World" to describe the underdeveloped countries of the former colonies. The UN set up an Afro-Asian group to defend their interests. In 1964, the UN set up an agency for the development of these countries (UNCTAD), thanks to the determination of 77 Third World countries.

In 1955, 29 countries took part in the Bandung conference (including India, Egypt, China, Indonesia, etc.) and decided to form, outside the UN, an organisation that would not be subservient to either of the two blocs: these were the beginnings of the

non-aligned movement, which held its first official conference in Yugoslavia in Belgrade in 1961.

Economic restructuring impoverishes the new states

The colonial economy (unprofitable monocultures and little industry), which served the interests of metropolitan France, had to be largely restructured. The privileged minorities of metropolitan origin who made the modern economy work left, as did the *pieds noirs* of Algeria. Independence impoverished the former colonies as investment came to a halt, capital from metropolitan France left and economic circuits were turned upside down.

As early as the 1950s and 1960s, Asian countries such as India began to focus on industrialisation. *Green revolutions* involving the modernisation of agriculture were attempted in several countries. Others turned to a socialist model of development with the nationalisation of natural resources.

In 1960, the main oil producers formed OPEC, which acted to raise the price of oil, considered to be unfairly undervalued.

The Organisation of African Unity was created in 1963 and ASEAN (South-East Asia) in 1967.

New states mired in economic problems

Most of the former colonies have remained poor, especially since after independence they were often badly managed (poor economic choices, corruption, dictatorships, etc.) and had to face urgent problems such as the demographic explosion.

As a result, the wealth gap between developed and poor countries has actually widened. Poor countries have become massively indebted. Unequal trade still exists, because it is the rich countries and their multinational companies that set the prices of raw materials produced in the Third World.

The colonial past gives rise to many tensions between countries

All efforts at economic or political union have failed: the *non-aligned* movement is virtually paralysed. There are too many Third World countries (more than 100 in the 1980s) and their interests are too different to be able to reach agreement; when it comes to urgent problems, local interests prevail.

Despite the efforts of the non-aligned movement, the Cold War tore the Third World apart: some countries chose to move closer to the USSR (Algeria, Vietnam, Laos), others to the Western bloc (Morocco, South American countries), leading to numerous conflicts (Communist Ethiopia versus pro-Western Somalia in the 1970s).

The borders inherited from the colonial era are at the heart of many tensions. The same applies to the ethnic rivalries that were once fostered by the former colonisers (see Rwandan genocide). The tensions inherited from the colonial era are compounded by a lack of democracy fostered by elites who are often corrupt (and sometimes aided by Western powers through arms sales). Dictators stay in power by relying on the army and rigged elections.

The nation state does not really exist in many African countries. Since the 1960s, other difficulties have arisen: AIDS, inter-ethnic massacres, and so on.

Former colonies that are now developed and democratised are setting an example

The Third World hopes of the 1950s and 1960s have faded away. However, the discourse of the non-aligned countries has now been taken up by the anti-

globalisation movement, which has taken up some of the criticisms of the anti-colonialists and denounced the injustice of economic relations between the countries of the *South* and those of the *North*.

Some of the former colonies have managed to develop economically, especially in Asia. But there is little sense of solidarity with the rest of the Third World.

The absence of democracy is not inevitable: some countries such as India and Senegal have made a successful transition to democracy.

Extracts from messages

Well, no, man must not give in, suffer, or be the slave of man, and consequently, if it proves necessary, he must rise up, stand up, fight. By philosophy, by absolute conviction, it is not a question, for the spirit world, of inciting man to war or murder, and it is well understood, for each and every one, for every spiritualist, that the invisible world will never give its acquiescence to conflicts, to states of war of an aggressive nature. It is not a question of picking quarrels with one's neighbour; it is not a question of invading, by thought or by one's own presence, that same neighbour, because then we fall into the fundamental error, that is to say, into the colonialist error, that is to say, into the error of all the colonisations undertaken previously in the history of humanity, namely the exploitation of one people over another people, of one culture over another culture.

The spirit of Charles de Gaulle

The present is the result of a colonial history that we must erase forever. We must not pretend... That is not politics. That is hypocritical. We must therefore understand that the men, women and children of these suffering peoples must be given not only the strength of humanity, but also the strength of dignity in a history that is recognised and defined.

The spirit of Jacques Duclos

Chapter 5

THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION - UNO

The idea of creating an international structure is not a recent one; it can be found in the eighteenth century in the work of the philosopher Kant, but it was not until the aftermath of the Great War in 1918 that the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, proposed a pact to the Allies, which was to be born in January 1920, when the Treaty of Versailles came into force, under the name of the *League of Nations* (*League*). Comprising 45 member states, this structure gave rise to great expectations that were far from being fulfilled. While it was effective in providing assistance to refugees and in setting up the International Labour Office, it was powerless to tackle all the serious problems and was unable to avert the Second World War.

The UN, which succeeded the League of Nations, was set up during the Second World War by the Allied States fighting against the Axis powers. Various charters, declarations and conferences initiated in 1941 led to the United Nations Charter, signed in San Francisco on 26 June 1945 by representatives of 51 countries. Over the years, other countries have joined, and to date there are 193 member states.

UN bodies

The General Assembly, a deliberative body that meets once a year, is made up of all the Member States, each of which has one vote. The main mission of the Organisation is to maintain international peace and security. Member States undertake to settle their disputes peacefully and to renounce the use of force; in return, if they are threatened or attacked, the UN undertakes to protect them.

To this end, a 15-member *Security Council* has been set up, including 5 permanent members (France, the United Kingdom, the United States, China and Russia). This Security Council, which meets every day, can decide on diplomatic and economic sanctions and even the use of armed forces. The UN has an army of *Blue Helmets*, impartial peacekeepers who take part in peacekeeping operations of various kinds: ceasefire observation, interposition missions. This makes it possible to freeze situations if not to resolve conflicts. The most recent actions concern the fight against terrorism by forcing States to penalise incitement to terrorism and its financing. However, the right of veto granted to the permanent members of the Security Council can paralyse certain decisions, for strategic reasons specific to the country concerned. Between 1945 and 1965, the USSR used its right of veto 103 times.

There is also the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, which sits in The Hague and is made up of 15 judges elected for nine years, and the UN General Secretariat, which is the administrative body.

The UN has a number of specialised institutions in the economic, financial, social and cultural sectors, which provide global governance in key areas that have emerged over time. These institutions are legally independent of the UN. They have separate budgets and their own member states, rules and staff. Most of their funding comes from voluntary contributions from governments, institutions and individuals. Some specialised agencies, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), already existed before the creation of the United Nations. The most important are the FAO for food and agriculture, the ILO for labour, created in 1919, the WHO for health,

UNESCO for culture, the IMF, the World Bank and its subsidiaries. Other structures covering telecommunications, postal services, meteorology, shipping, tourism and the promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy provide coordinated global governance in crucial areas.

The UN has played an important role in the social and humanitarian field (aid for refugees, promotion of human rights, the fight against the scourge of drugs), and the sums devoted have increased significantly. Before the creation of the UN, only charitable humanitarian associations provided assistance to victims of natural disasters and refugees from war-torn countries. With the creation of the UN, new institutions were set up, such as the UNHCR, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (two Nobel Peace Prize winners), which provides international protection for refugees by monitoring governments' compliance with international agreements, particularly in terms of the right to asylum. Within the UN, an office coordinates the work of the three major humanitarian agencies: the UNHCR, the WFP (World Food Programme) and UNICEF, as more than half of all refugees are children.

However, the results at a political level are more mixed, with the Middle East problem far from resolved. The division of the Palestinian territories into two states, Jewish and Arab, has created conflicts, and the final division is not the one advocated by the UN. The problem has worsened considerably with the untimely expansion of Israeli settlements. Similarly, mediation between India and Pakistan on the question of Kashmir has not led to the referendum recommended so that the peoples can decide freely. In South Africa and Vietnam, the UN proved powerless. Closer to home, there was the failure of the international community in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, in Bosnia, Darfur, Somalia and Iraq in 2003. Similarly, the Syrian problem has remained unresolved due to the paralysis of the United Nations Security Council.

Defending fundamental rights

It would be unfair, however, not to pay tribute to the decisive role played by this structure, particularly in terms of respect for human rights; it is to the UN that we owe the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* adopted on 10 February 1948.

The Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body of the United Nations system, composed of 47 States, whose aim is to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. It carries out a periodic review of the human rights situation in all Member States, where necessary denouncing violations on the grounds of race, language or religion. The Council can provide expert assistance or appoint a commission of enquiry when fundamental rights are violated. In 1979, for example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted. A special body, *UN Women*, was set up to ensure that women are respected in the same way as men. It intervenes in the fields of health and reproduction and condemns all forms of violence against women.

The concept of human development was introduced at the Millennium Summit in 2000, under the impetus of its Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Decisions were taken to raise living standards in disadvantaged countries, combat poverty and precariousness, fight infant mortality and disease, promote education, gender equality and environmental protection. As far as the climate is concerned, the UN pioneered the concept of sustainable development by organising the first Earth Summit in Rio in 1992. The Conferences of the Parties (COPs) were subsequently organised under its auspices.

The UN Secretary-General has a key role. Elected by the General Assembly, he is closely dependent on the Security Council, so his role can be more or less important,

or even hindered. However, some Secretaries have left their mark on the history of the institution through their humanist initiatives, such as Kofi Annan, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001 jointly with the organisation for their work "for a better organised and more peaceful world". Boutros Boutros Galli has also sought solutions for peace in the Middle East.

Future prospects

The UN has a decisive role that is often overlooked. Despite its failures, its record is nevertheless positive. Its innovative and humanist ideas come up against the vetoes of the permanent members of the Security Council, but also and above all against the powers of financial bodies such as the IMF and the World Bank.

Its role needs to be fleshed out and developed, and this will require a review of the way it is organised and operates. It also certainly means raising global awareness of the need for solidarity and cooperation between countries, because while some issues concern only one country or region, others, such as the climate emergency and the protection of natural resources, concern the entire population of the globe and can no longer be ignored.

The afterlife has made itself known on this subject:

"The United Nations could be the source of the transformation of the Earth's political landscape by deciding on the total abolition of atomic weapons, by deciding on the conversion of military industries to peaceful ends, by deciding on the financing of a programme to irrigate the dried-up soils of Africa and Asia. It would be decided to abolish stock market activity in favour of a general emulation of all populations in the sense of a vast financial investment for the development of all the underdeveloped areas of the Earth. At the same time, it would be decided to set up an ecology programme to save rivers, trees and oceans from the threat of pollution, which will become the peril of the third millennium.

This structure would make it possible to redefine globalism, not the globalism of the stock markets, but the globalism that binds all human beings together, because they come from the same divine causal force and are exposed to the same difficulties, the same law of evolution and the same spiritual future.

The Spirits' perspective for the future of the planet has always been the universality of the world, with the gradual disappearance of ethnic and patriotic particularisms, in favour of genuine cooperation between states, to eventually make conflicts and borders disappear.

The representatives of the UN think and act along these lines, but this global structure is only made up of the countries that make it up. It is not, therefore, a super-state structure, but a body whose power is very limited, since it is dependent on the most powerful countries, the five permanent members of the Security Council, who hardly respect international rules, and block any possibility of agreement, given the right of veto of just one country out of the five, which can block an entire project. Reform of this Council has long been called for by other states, and it is a demand that we must continue to support, in order to move towards a new sharing of responsibilities.

Chapter 6

ECONOMIC QUESTIONS

Social and economic organisation depends on the level of evolution of our world. We know that on more advanced planets, which Earth will become in the distant future, society is based on principles of equality and fraternity, where nothing is done for personal gain and speculation in any form does not exist. Everyone contributes to the common good through their work, without seeking personal gain or notoriety; wealth is equitably distributed according to needs and no population is exploited for the benefit of another. There is no such thing as delinquency; there are no crimes or misdemeanours. Similarly, money no longer exists because exchanges are carried out in a different way; the stock exchange and other financial institutions are unknown.

These happy prospects are not yet applicable on Earth, where inferiority characterised by greed, jealousy and pride is still the lot of many inhabitants. So, this ideal model will be what we will have to work towards progressively, for metamorphoses on such a scale that they are still unimaginable in the immediate future.

If we look at the evolution of the Earth over the last few centuries, the progress of societies has been slow but nonetheless real. Social transformations have been achieved thanks to men and women who fought for greater justice and sharing, sometimes altruistic visionaries who paid for their humanist struggle with their lives. From the 18th century to the present day, major advances have been made, such as the abolition of privileges based on birth, the abolition of slavery, the abandonment of colonisation, social and health protection, and state assistance for the most disadvantaged. However, while people in France and other Western and European countries live better than at other times in history, the same cannot be said of certain countries where people still suffer from hunger and malnutrition, where they sleep on the streets or in shanty towns, where there is no access to healthcare, often because wealthy nations continue to exploit impoverished countries, plundering their natural resources and forcing on them very expensive manufactured goods that enrich major industrial groups. Such a situation is unacceptable from the point of view of spiritist ethics, and all efforts must be directed towards resolving these inequalities, which seem insurmountable only to those who do not wish to see equality and well-being for all. In the past, all countries have demonstrated that they know how to mobilise resources and human means for warlike conflicts, so it would be possible to deploy the same formulas to ensure the happiness of all the inhabitants of the planet.

ECONOMICS, AN INEXACT SCIENCE

Economics is a constantly evolving discipline, drawing on past experience to build the future. Economics is about the flow of goods, exchanges between different economic agents (individuals, companies, public authorities), decisions and connections on a global scale. The choices made can have positive or disastrous consequences for producers and consumers, which is why it is called political economy because, organised at state level, it has an impact on the way life is organised and on the relationships between inhabitants.

While it may have a scientific aspect due to certain mechanisms or automatisms linked to supply and demand in particular, it is above all dependent on lifestyle choices, social models and the distribution of wealth. There is nothing rational about

it, as Bertrand Russel said: *"Economics is that discipline where you don't know what you're talking about or whether what you're saying is true"*.

Everything that is said about the economy is unverifiable; one thing can be shown as true or false. Sometimes, studies are geared towards demonstrating a particular result; they even go so far as to close down institutes that do not deliver the expected results. Moreover, economists are far from in agreement on the effects produced by this or that measure, and some forecasts have turned out to be completely wrong.

In 1914, the economist John M. Keynes was convinced that it was impossible for Europe to go to war because the States did not have the means to finance it! On 15 October 1929, nine days before Black Thursday and the famous stock market crash, Irving Fisher, a renowned professor and economic theorist, announced that share prices had reached a permanent high! The subprime crisis of 2007 divided economists. Forecasts announced with conviction often fail to materialise because they are based on mathematics that do not take account of the human factor and the specific characteristics of different countries. In this way, economics comes close to psychology; it is not an objective science but depends on irrational factors linked to human or political factors.

The economy is closely linked to money. In the Middle Ages, the flow of money was subject to the prescriptions of the Catholic Church, which prohibited trading in money. Usury (lending at interest) was not authorised by this institution until the seventeenth century.

Thus, the modernity of the economy goes hand in hand with the emancipation of morality, starting from strict old moral concepts and evolving towards the unbridled liberalism we know today.

According to Aristotle's highly moral system, economics is the art of properly administering a house, and by extension a city, with the aim of achieving fairness by ensuring harmony between the various inhabitants and denouncing the power of money. For a long time, it was considered that the value of a good depended on the cost of production, i.e., the amount of labour required to make it and the cost of the materials needed to produce it.

As early as the XVIth century, with the Salamanca school, it was considered that the right price resulted from the joint estimate made by buyers and sellers, and therefore from supply and demand. These ideas were taken up two centuries later by Adam Smith, the great theorist of the free market, who advocated political liberalism and distrust of the State. For him, the market was self-regulating and had no use for the decisions taken by governments, which were the result of the connivance between princes and the bourgeoisie at the origin of the market system.

As soon as modern states were established, decisions were taken by those in power; the State provided the impetus, notably by creating the great royal factories. Interventionist policies directly inspired by the mercantile ideas of the time and directed sectors of activity began to emerge.

THE BIRTH OF CAPITALISM

The nineteenth century saw the birth of capitalism. Until then, production and trade had been based on subsistence farming and crafts. Industry appeared with its factories, notably coal factories and textile industries in Great Britain, then in Belgium, France, Germany and Russia.

Thanks to machines, productivity increased, demand grew, profits soared, capital accumulated and the economy became more complex. This led to the emergence of

companies whose capital was financed by shares. Banks flourished, with deposit banks and merchant banks. Commerce took on the scale of department stores. The colonisation of parts of Africa and Asia enabled Europeans to obtain the raw materials essential to their business at low cost.

Where in the “Ancien Régime”, crises were caused by crop failures in geographically limited areas, the new crises were financial and stock market crises, marked by overproduction, bankruptcies, unemployment and often capital flight. As a result, the first banking crises of the 19th century led to years of worldwide depression. Some economists, such as Jean-Baptiste Say and Adam Smith, argued that the market should be left alone to regulate itself; others, such as Sismondi and Marx, advocated state intervention to correct the excesses of unbridled capitalism.

From then on, the XXth century saw two major economic systems clash:

- The liberal or capitalist system

Production goods are privately owned, and the state intervenes only in very limited areas, such as the creation of a framework for work, measures to protect workers and health standards. It ensures that bilateral trade between states is respected.

- The interventionist or socialist system

The State does not limit itself to its regalian missions of justice and police, but intervenes in the economy by regulating, controlling and managing sectors that are not necessarily intended to generate profits and speculation. The means of production are held by the State, as was the case for the Conseil National de la Résistance in 1945 in its desire to establish a just social order, advocating the nationalisation of energy sources, subsoil resources, insurance companies and major banks.

The crises at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century demonstrated that no economic theory prevailed that could protect against crashes or collapses, with all the tragic human consequences that could entail.

Today, economists are questioning the notion of growth as a determining factor; on the contrary, they are now talking about degrowth, or rather proposing to evaluate wealth in a different way. The Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, for example, has put forward the idea of including in GDP everything that is done voluntarily and free of charge, i.e., without any financial flow being recorded, which represents significant elements that contribute significantly to the well-being of the population.

These days, economics is beginning to open up more to the social sciences and humanities. There is less confidence in market mechanisms, and more emphasis on the public economy, the role of the State, taxation and infrastructure. Even the World Bank, which used to adhere to neo-liberal principles, has revised its approach at the instigation of its vice-president, the economist François Bourguignon, who advocated focusing on inequality and income distribution rather than bank profits. The goal of this international financial institution is now shared prosperity.

And then there are new issues, such as global warming, which affect every country on the planet and can no longer be ignored.

Despite some progress, inequality has increased. Using a database of 175 million data points to measure differences in income and wealth, economists from more than seventy countries have denounced a sharp rise in disparities around the world over the last forty years.

Moreover, it is not the economists and financiers who have given the best thought to

the various systems, often losing themselves in cold calculations, when the real subject is that of living together of all beings incarnated on the globe. On this point, Raymond Aron, journalist and philosopher, gave us this posthumous account:

"Economic systems are outdated principles that no longer correspond to the demands of the people, the nature of the people, the organisation of the people. Economies are dependent on ideologies. They are rigid, set in stone, ineffective for the most part because they are absent from the movement of time, from the evolution inherent in the nature of human beings who are spirits in mutation. The economy is not liberating; it locks people into inadequate systems. It sclerotizes social relations, diverts production and prevents the true distribution of wealth.

Economies are one-off, opportunistic speculations. These speculations are based not on concern for man, but on the profit that can be made from his daily production. In this respect, they are already doomed. Economies turn their backs on people, they turn their backs on climates, they turn their backs on relief. They turn their backs on the natural wealth of the different countries on Earth. They call themselves international. They are indeed international, but they do so with contempt for the planet and its inhabitants. The economy must be neither liberal nor statist. The economy must be natural. It must be a desired organisation, deeply desired by human knowledge and corresponding to its real needs, its true nature. Political systems have made the economy so dangerous that it has become capable of destroying a region, a country, a people. You can, by economic decree, dry out a land, make it arid and unproductive. If you want, you can organise a famine. I'm not against any form of organisation. For an organisation to be effective, it must take into account what it is designed to do, i.e. for living beings, incarnated on a living planet. I accuse a lot of governments of pretending to be looking for a solution when the solution already exists for those who want to apply it.

THE PHILOSOPHERS OF ECONOMY

Many philosophers have researched and studied possible economic systems that might be more or less compatible with the futuristic perspectives of Spiritist philosophy, according to the model of the higher worlds in the Universe.

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), a German philosopher, argued that for a truly humane society to emerge, philosophy had to be extended into politics: "Suffering humanity and thinking humanity must be brought together", in other words, intellectuals and manual workers.

Charles Fourier (1772-1837), in his utopian vision of society, placed man at the heart of the debate, in recognition of God, in a communion with benevolent and balancing nature. He suggested creating phalansteries where all human activities would be harmonious and wellbeing-based. He envisioned a society in which everyone could achieve their full potential, so that artistic vocations and talents could blossom. He advocated respect for all, in particular the recognition of women's rights, which had hitherto been flouted. For him, the individual right to property can only be based on the general common good, and not for personal enrichment. The exercise of this right can vary over time, because the quest for ever greater profits leads to a mercantile and dehumanised society; the more property increases, the more the worker is obliged to accept work at a low price that is too competitive. The greater the number of merchants, the more they are driven to deceit by the difficulty of generating profits.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865)

We all know his famous maxim: "Property is theft". Centuries of ownership demonstrate this. Property is society's suicide because it encourages individual ownership at the expense of others, with the aim of personal enrichment rather than sharing. Land, tools and capital do not produce anything on their own; they need work. So, the owner must not enslave the worker, because without the worker's labour, property has no value. Proudhon proposed the creation of cooperatives where all workers would own the tools of production, making a distinction between ownership and possession. He advocated the opening of a people's bank with no capital and no profits, circulating vouchers pledged against the product of each member's labour, through which money would be lent without interest to small owners and workers.

James Mill (1773-1836), father of John Stuart Mill, suggested setting up workers' cooperatives and limiting inheritance according to the wealth of the heir.

Gracchus Babeuf (1760-1794) saw family inheritance as a system of appropriation, a kind of fraud and an incentive to reproduce a system that led to the despoiling of the poorest for the benefit of owners who were always greedy for new possessions.

Owen, an American patron of the arts, advocated a social system in which private property would be banned.

Louis Blanc (1811-1882) proposed opening national workshops and advocated planning.

William Godwin (1756-1836) said: "The vices which are inseparable from the system of property would disappear in a society where all shared equally in the gifts of nature".

For the British philosopher **William Ogilvy (1793-1871)**, "landed property has for centuries been a far greater detriment and obstacle to the happiness of mankind than the tyranny of kings, the imposture of priests and the chicanery of lawyers".

David Ricardo (1772-1823) demonstrated that the work of industrial wage earners is the true source of wealth, and that landowners and financiers get rich without work, to the detriment of wage earners.

Karl Marx (1818-1883), the visionary, drew inspiration from the work of the philosophers, Hegel in particular, to think about a better world. He saw capitalism as a precondition for collectivism, which initially represented progress for mankind. A company's capital, i.e., the money deposited by lenders or shareholders, makes it possible to set up industrial structures and acquire machines that will replace and relieve man; work will then be less arduous and safer, and it will take less time to produce the same amount of work.

Capitalism was the best of all systems in Marx's time and represented a tremendous advance on previous forms of exploitation. It created a world market, but it was only a transitional system. Capitalists will become superfluous, the work of managing a company will be completely separated from the ownership of capital. Capitalists will

become nothing more than lenders of money. Eventually, Marx foresaw and demonstrated the decline of the capitalist system.

Because of competition, companies are using more and more capital without generating proportionately more profits, leading to a fall in revenue. It then becomes impossible to provide the owners of capital with the surplus value they can demand, and the solution adopted is for them to reduce wages. This is what has happened since the advent of capitalism, especially since the stock market system has transformed simple lenders into investors who bet on a company and intend to collect the fruits of their investment at the expense of the employees of those same companies. However, wages cannot be cut with impunity, and in order to continue to prosper, capitalists engage in speculative activities that lead to financial crises. This capitalist dynamic necessarily leads, on the one hand, to rising income inequalities and, on the other, to financial crises.

Moreover, the race for profits led to an increase in production and consequently to the search for new consumers by exciting their appetites, but above all by creating fictitious needs, resulting in the consumer society of the late 20th century.

Originally, primitive society allowed people to remain free by doing the work they needed to survive. Modernisation and the division of labour led to the enrichment of humanity and the emergence of social classes. The existence of classes is linked only to certain phases in the historical development of production. Capitalism has revolutionised the productive potential of humanity by breaking down national isolation, creating vast metropolises and annihilating feudalism, but it has also led to the creation of a class of proletarians.

For Marx, *the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat*. This power devolved to the people is merely the transition to the abolition of all classes, and hence to a classless society. In his view, social classes are defined above all by whether or not they own the means of production. Previous revolutions, particularly that of 1789 in France, had done nothing for the people; although the privileges of the nobility had been abolished, it was the bourgeoisie that emerged victorious.

The capitalist and stock market system led to serious financial crises as early as 1857, with the collapse of stock market values in New York, London, Paris and Vienna, leading to serious cash flow problems for businesses, such as the first "Black Friday" on 11 May 1886.

The obvious conclusion for him, as for other precursors of communism such as the utopians Thomas More, Tommaso Campanella, Fourier and Nicolaï Tchernychevski, was to collectivise the major means of production in order to escape the temptation of profit and speculation. But communism can only be global.

Marx has inspired many economists. If Marxism-Leninism did not convince as a system of society, it is because some people shamefully used Marxist principles to establish a dictatorial regime leading to the worst excesses, as was the case with Stalinism, which replaced the dictatorship of money with the dictatorship of crime. From its beyond, the spirit of Karl Marx has regretted the use made of his ideas: *"I denounce here, before you, all those who have claimed to be the depositaries of my ideas, those who have become the torturers of totalitarian societies in my name, those who have dared to make the poor dream of a happy tomorrow, of the great evening of the proletariat, only to exploit and crush them even more. My philosophy has never found a form on earth or in any country. Those who lay claim to it are traitors to my thought. But my thought had been written. I only demand a society*

without class, without money and without the State".

These systems of collective ownership, where the idea of personal enrichment is absent, were initiated in the past by the first Christian communities or by certain Indian tribes, described as "savages" in the eyes of Westerners, who set up systems of collective ownership with a common sharing of wealth.

More than a century after Marx's death, his predictions about the evolution of the economic world are proving to be cruelly accurate, and his philosophy is being referred to more and more often today.

Jean de Sismondi (1773-1842) was the first to recognise the decisive difference between capitalism and previous modes of production. The spectacular development of mechanical means of production meant that capitalists had to find outlets for their ever-growing output. They therefore fought to the death to conquer markets and reduce the cost of production, by cutting wages and increasing labour in order to catch up with more competitive competitors.

THE PLACE OF MONEY

A society without money is not an option on Earth in the short term, but it is possible to change its role. When it was first introduced, money was not as important as it is today; it replaced the bartering of our ancestors. It has always been essential to exchange products and services that could not be converted into other goods, especially if the contracting parties were separated by long distances. This is how fiat money (first gold, then coins) came into being, with the aim of acquiring what was needed to work, eat and prosper; then came scriptural money (cheques, transfers without handling cash).

Very quickly, the notion of profit and speculation emerged. Some people quickly realised that it was possible to speculate, to lend money in return for a fee linked to the amount of the loan and its duration. The Catholic Church reacted to these new practices by forbidding the charging of interest. This was not the case for the Jewish religion, which authorised the lending of money for a fee, giving this people, who were excluded from certain professions and restricted to banking, a very special reputation and history. Marx (of Jewish origin) made the link between Judaism and money. For him, religion, individualism and money were inseparable. To free ourselves from money, we must free ourselves from all religions, and Judaism in particular. He was famous for his famous phrase "Religion is the opium of the people", a phrase he explained in a spiritist séance: *"My words have suffered from bad images, the result of ignorance, sometimes also the result of the perfidy of those who have the malicious pleasure of always and always wanting to transform and adapt the philosophies of those whose only desire was the good of all humanity. I have said and I continue to say before you that religion is the opium of the people. I have never said that God is the drug of humanity. However, that is how it was conveyed. I did not ask for hatred; I did not ask for unjust combat. I did not demand vengeance. I believe I have established, in the day of consciousness, of a consciousness that I want to be a sun in every incarnate head, justice, a terrible word, that exists in all times and in all countries and in all forms."*

GLOBALISATION

Globalisation has become inescapable; it can bring benefits to all, developing countries and rich countries alike. But the reality is bitter.

Natural exchanges have always taken place with other countries to buy or sell

products, commodities and raw materials. Globalisation has accelerated thanks to the railway, the telegraph and steam navigation, reducing distances and encouraging the development of markets. The world moved from agriculture to industry, then from industry to services; there were winners, but above all there were many losers. Today it is driven by the development of new information and communication technologies, but it is dominated by capital and finance. Countries in South Asia and Latin America have literally been plundered and exploited, but it is Africa that has paid the heaviest price.

As economist and Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz points out, "economic globalisation has gone faster than political globalisation, with economic materialism taking precedence over all other values". This has often taken the form of a unilateral takeover, as in the era of colonialism, when a number of European countries colonised countries on different continents to exploit their natural wealth. It is linked to the pursuit of profit at the expense of the people of the Third World, who have been exploited and degraded. If there is a need for global coordination, it must be based on an ethic of respect and fairness in reciprocal exchanges. We have the right to buy raw materials that do not exist in one country, but we must pay the producers properly. In the same way, we could allow countries in need to benefit from our food surpluses.

The failure of social globalisation is so obvious that it is the NGOs that step in to help the victims of hunger, disease, natural disasters or the plundering of resources.

Numerous debates and forums have been held on globalisation, based on the observation that in a globalised economy, no country can ignore what is happening on the planet as a whole, especially when the issues are global and concern the natural environment, we all share, with global warming and pollution. Structures have been created to regulate world trade, ostensibly to protect the weakest states, but in fact to maintain the stranglehold of the rich economies on those of the most disadvantaged countries.

The system of global governance is flawed. The *World Bank* and the *International Monetary Fund* have been set up, but their main purpose is to protect creditors rather than to help developing countries or finance projects. Financial conditions and economic standards were imposed on these countries, with often disastrous results (Argentina). The *trickle-down* theory, which claims that the wealth of some countries trickles down to others, is an illusion. Measures were put in place in 1990, but an initial assessment ten years later shows that poverty has increased everywhere except in China, with alarming peaks in Africa, where extreme poverty is a particular problem.

State structures in poor countries are often poorly organised or weakened, or even undemocratic, making them more vulnerable and exacerbating the problems.

The GDP (gross domestic product) so dear to our leaders is an indicator that hides other realities: income is certainly a component of standards of living, but other elements are not measured, such as health, life expectancy, infant mortality and education; similarly, the accumulation of new income is sometimes achieved by ravaging the environment, depleting scarce natural resources and taking on excessive debt.

Free trade, the magic word, is organised to serve the interests of the rich countries of Europe and the United States, with agreements that protect imports from developing countries. These rich countries have very powerful lobbies, which can subsidise weak sectors such as agriculture, to the detriment of sectors that are predominant in

poor countries, where the share of industry and services is smaller.

Moreover, it is not only income that counts, nor the wealth produced, but living conditions as a whole. The impact of anti-dumping laws is fictitious for poor countries, but real for rich predator countries.

At the same time, the collapse of communism in the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe, and their conversion to capitalism, have had disastrous effects, such as a fall in life expectancy and per capita income. The privatisation of production assets has led to a sell-off of wealth, with a massive flight of capital. The profits made have been used for corruption, and a mafia-like system has been established.

The enemy is the market economy

Bilateral negotiations are biased and always work to the advantage of the richer, better prepared and better trained countries. We need an international judicial system.

Intellectual property creates monopolies in rich countries, with poor countries thinking nothing of registering patents. However, this monopoly situation is only profitable for the big groups; prices are set freely with the aim of increasing profits, which are spent very little on innovation but on advertising to sell even more. This situation is glaringly obvious in the pharmaceutical sector, where the monopolies of large companies prevent the production of generic medicines that are more accessible to poorer populations.

There is also what is known as biopiracy, where multinationals acquire rare exotic tropical plants at low cost or plunder them to transform them into various food or cosmetic products, registering patents in defiance of traditional knowledge.

Natural resources are not protected in poor and emerging countries, or are sometimes poorly managed; this is the case with oil, which is present in large quantities in certain countries, but whose profits, because of the mode of governance, only benefit a very small minority who buy expensive manufactured goods when these profits could be used to improve the health and education of a miserable population.

The arms trade

There is the problem of private companies, oil, mining and gas, where lobbies and corruption reign. These companies make huge profits, which can be used to finance dubious interests such as foreign election campaigns. And in many countries, these profits are also used to finance arms purchases. States rich in natural resources often have other concerns than the well-being of their own populations.

ECOLOGY

The environment concerns the whole planet. Although global warming is partly a natural phenomenon, it poses short-term dangers that can be as devastating as wars. If measures are not taken very quickly, increasingly frequent storms could wipe out countries such as Bangladesh, which is highly exposed because it is located in a delta.

All countries must commit to reducing greenhouse gas pollution. Common resources are being plundered, particularly at sea, with the problem of industrial fishing, which leads to fish being caught faster than they can reproduce.

The market economy is not concerned with social costs and benefits, but the quest for profit at any price is detrimental to maintaining and protecting the environment. The legal and, above all, financial irresponsibility of the managers involved in

disasters such as oil spills is also striking.

The aim of private enterprise is to make money, not to provide charity. A desirable economic system would be one that allows wealth to be shared and ensures that everyone has the means to live decently, without encouraging people to consume more and more in the illusion of a false happiness that divides human beings and distances them from the real values that could bring them all together.

These days, some people are advocating the idea of degrowth, a concept that is not new but that is developing more and more. Many philosophers, thinkers and even economists are putting forward the idea that we can no longer live as we have in recent decades, as we did during the post-war “*Trente Glorieuses*”, which led to an ever-increasing pursuit of well-being, comfort and consumption, without any concern for the damage caused to the environment. The race to accumulate consumer goods, made indispensable by well-orchestrated advertising and rendered ephemeral by programmed obsolescence, has led to ecological disasters and the exploitation of fragile populations, all to enrich large industrial groups.

We can live in harmony without over-consuming, but above all by rehabilitating somewhat forgotten values, by caring more about the environment in which we live, and by rediscovering and respecting a nature that is essential to our equilibrium.

WHAT WOULD HARMONIOUS GLOBALISATION LOOK LIKE?

We need to think about a form of international governance in which all countries are represented, and not just the most powerful, as is currently the case when the decisions of the rich countries, particularly the USA, dominate.

The international community needs to put in place an action plan to implement these various points:

- introduce effective anti-corruption laws and limit banking secrecy. Corruption is more widespread in a poor country, which is why an appropriate legal arsenal and proper remuneration of public officials are needed to prevent any corruption.
- certification of precious raw materials to prevent trafficking (diamonds, exotic woods, etc.), and the introduction of standards enabling poor countries to receive the exact equivalent value of the natural resources they possess.
- make companies more socially responsible; avoid exposing their employees to dangers such as exposure to various toxic or carcinogenic products, which will require regulations to be adapted.
- limit the power of large companies by putting an end to their monopolies and anti-competitive practices (Microsoft), resulting in higher prices and less innovation.
- change corporate governance: all stakeholders should be involved in decision-making: employees, local authorities where companies are based. We should also make certain employees, such as the CEOs of large companies, accountable in all areas, including finance.
- make companies aware of their ecological responsibilities when resources are plundered and the environment damaged, which is just as serious as fiddling accounts or embezzling funds. We need to review the management of shared natural resources, 'the commons', such as the air and the sea, the first urgent action being to regulate fishing.
- standardise regulations worldwide and set up international courts to prevent dishonest managers from sheltering themselves.
- amend the laws on banking secrecy and combat tax havens where there are totally tax-free zones.

Many CAC 40 companies have subsidiaries in tax havens, subsidiaries that are

totally disconnected from their economic activity, with the sole aim of avoiding taxation. Ingenious and well-trying mechanisms exist, enabling profits to be channelled through shell companies to a subsidiary in a country where the gains will not be taxed. In addition to the colossal financial loss, estimated at between 17,000 and 25,500 billion dollars for 2016, or more than a third of the world's GDP, there is a perfectly immoral aspect, as the funds concealed in this way may be the counterpart to illegal activities. Tax evasion is estimated at \$1,000 billion in the European Union, or six times its annual budget.

What is particularly illogical and inadmissible is that these tax havens are not all in faraway places such as Bermuda, the Cayman Islands or Dubai, but are also located in Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands or Cyprus, all of which are members of the European Union! As a result, Luxembourg has become the hub of tax avoidance and optimisation for some of France's biggest groups.

It is not only companies that place their profits in these favoured locations, but also individuals at the head of personal fortunes, directors of prestigious groups, businessmen, bankers, stars, sportsmen and sportswomen, or even elected representatives of major cities. As well as hiding their wealth in tax havens, the world's largest fortunes, estimated at around €500 billion worldwide, use tax avoidance and optimisation schemes. In 2015, European banks deposited around €25 billion, or 26% of their profits, in tax havens.

We need to standardise tax laws, to prevent profits made in one country from being taxed in another tax-friendly country, usually very easily and without any controls; "money has no smell", as they say...

Fabien Roussel, Member of the French National Assembly, demonstrated how easy it is to set up fictitious companies and how there are no controls, having himself set up his own offshore company in Gibraltar with just a few clicks, giving the names of fictitious directors.

We need to tax digital giants such as GAFAM and everything to do with "uberisation". These companies are getting colossal profits, with Facebook, described as a "digital gangster" by the British Parliament, achieving a turnover of more than \$55 billion in 2018 in an operation that borders on illegality. In reaction to these digital giants, small servers, local "pods", have sprung up like "Diaspora".

Everything about the way the law of the market works needs to be reviewed and reformed. The rich countries would simply have to open up their markets to the poorest without any conditions of reciprocity or economic conditions. This would enable emerging countries to process and package their own fruit and vegetable production, for example. This would create jobs and reduce the carbon footprint associated with air freight. It would also be necessary to change the current system, in which manufactured products are taxed more heavily on export, thereby penalising producer countries.

In this relentless struggle to accumulate profits, consumers have their part to play, as multinationals surf on the demands of their customers, directing them towards more novelties and possibilities, always creating new needs for them.

The debt problem

Debt has always been used as an instrument of political domination of poor countries by rich countries. At the beginning of the 19th century, some countries emerged from colonialism only to return to a new form of dependence.

Poor countries need financing, which they obtain from banks at high interest rates or backed by unfavourable fluctuating indices, but always favourable to the big banks; in

addition, the amount of commission is often exorbitant.

Repayments are made at the expense of health and education budgets. Financial crises, which always originate in rich countries, strangle poor countries, which are forced to repay and bail out Western banks, as has been the case in every financial crisis from the first ones in the 19th century to the one in 2008.

The bailout solves the problem of the banks, not that of the governments. All of this is being done with the complicity of the ruling classes in poor countries, who prefer to borrow rather than tax their wealth, especially since by acquiring their country's debt securities they can guarantee themselves a substantial income.

Lenders are just as responsible as borrowers; over-indebtedness is profitable for lenders.

What to do with the debt?

The solution would be to write off the debt of the poorest countries in the same way as we do for over-indebted individuals.

The concept of odious debt was introduced by Alexander Sack in 1925: it is a loan granted to a State manifestly against the interests of its population, with the conscious agreement of the country's representative(s). These debts are sometimes contracted by brutal, undemocratic regimes, enabling them to remain in power. These debts have an impact on the people who suffer under these regimes, and should therefore be cancelled. In the past, debts have already been cancelled.

The CADTM (Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt) is fighting to have cases of odious debt recognised, with the example of Greece, where the European Troika refused to write off the debt, leading to forced privatisations, drastic wage and pension cuts, limiting social benefits, all in order to bail out European banks. We forget that Germany's debts at the end of the Second World War had been considerably reduced.

Rich countries must not impose conditions that cannot be met, and repayment must not be made at a time when the poor country is most in need of funds.

The risk should be reduced by indexing the amount to the local currency and not to hard currencies such as the dollar, which allows banks to speculate.

Debt reform must go hand in hand with monetary and fiscal reform, an overhaul of the banking system and trade agreements. If global debt is growing, it is as a result of the priority given to capitalism, by creating ever-higher yields that divert capital from its true purpose, which is to support the economy. Moreover, the central banks are showing their perplexity in managing key interest rates, as inflation and growth are not as expected.

Similarly, international bankruptcy legislation needs to be put in place.

The debt in France

The State, like local authorities, needs to borrow money to build or renovate infrastructure that will last over time (schools, roads, hospitals). Over the last few decades, debt repayment has become a real problem for all governments; the amounts borrowed, plus capitalised interest, represent increasingly large sums (financing the interest alone is already a problem in itself), with a heavy impact on public budgets.

It has to be said that if the State's debt is increasing, it is not because public spending is increasing excessively, contrary to what people would have us believe, but because revenues are decreasing, particularly tax revenues. For example, corporation tax in OECD countries has fallen by six points in 15 years. However, the

estimated amount of fraud, whether real fraud, tax evasion or tax optimisation, is roughly equivalent to the amount of debt. All we need to do is tackle this problem, which is certainly not confined to France. Furthermore, the fact that national budgets are increasing is not in itself a problem. The more a State intervenes in the economic sector, the more infrastructure it creates, the more it takes charge of the well-being of its inhabitants in terms of health and education, the more financial resources will be required.

Reforming the global reserve system

Historically, gold was used as a currency, and trade was settled in gold. Later, fiat money was discovered, which was more convenient, but it was necessary to have currency reserves equivalent in gold. This led to the use of hard currencies, first the pound sterling and then, after the Second World War, the US dollar.

All the countries in the world have reserves; almost all of them are invested in dollars, which yield little, and most of them are short-term treasury bills, which yield a lot for the USA but not for the countries that subscribe to them.

Billions are invested in dollars when this money could be used to create wealth; it's a system that only benefits the USA.

Some are proposing the creation of a global reserve currency (an idea already put forward by Keynes under the name of *bancor*), and initiatives have already been taken in this direction in Asian countries.

Reviewing global institutions

While these monetary institutions are necessary for development, they remain unfair, having led, for example, to the economic failure of countries that followed the recommendations of the Washington Consensus. It is not the institutions that are to blame (IMF, World Bank) but the way they operate; they are managed solely by the advanced industrial countries, mainly the United States. The failure is linked to the policies of these countries, which have tried to reshape the world system to suit their own interests and those of their multinationals.

The structure of voting rights at the IMF and World Bank, which are currently proportional to contributions and therefore favour the rich countries (the director is currently appointed by the President of the United States), should be changed to give more weight to developing countries. The UN could play a role in regulating these structures.

Joseph Stiglitz notes: "Citizens, the electorate, must be involved in this process; we can't blame leaders for everything. We are part of a global economy, but almost all of us live in local communities and we continue to think locally; a life, a job, has more meaning in our country than elsewhere, immediate well-being is sought. With globalisation, what happens in one part of the world makes waves elsewhere, since ideas, knowledge, goods, services, capital and people cross borders more easily. Epidemics and terrorism are global, so solidarity and sharing can be too, provided we decide to do so and put in place the structures to make it happen.

As a profit-driven society, we need to reduce profit, and consumer behaviour is a key factor in this.

Future projects must be based on cooperation and sharing in all areas: research, knowledge, education, culture, health, agriculture, food, climate, transport and energy. One example is the Energy Support Committee for Africa, initiated by Jean-Louis Borloo as part of a vast electrification project.

Nature, agriculture, food

Food is a fundamental need for all the world's inhabitants. It is unacceptable, even scandalous, that in the 21st century, people are dying of hunger or malnutrition. This is a crucial issue. But here, as elsewhere, and perhaps even more than elsewhere because it's a captive market, health scandals - salmonella-contaminated milk, mad cow disease, horsemeat in lasagne, water pollution by nitrates, pesticides, the danger of glyphosate - have a decisive impact on health and the environment. Once again, agribusiness' quest for profit has resulted in the ravaging of nature, the impoverishment of farmers and the jeopardy to human health.

This sector should be declared to be of general interest. Everything to do with agriculture should be excluded from the market. It would be a good idea to return to the concept of the 1948 Havana Charter, thought up earlier by Franklin D. Roosevelt, which declares that everything to do with nature, food, water, cultivation, fishing, forests and subsoil is exempt from free trade, because all this must serve fundamental needs where profit and speculation have no place, but where farmers must receive fair and decent remuneration.

What is happening at the moment is all the more serious because agriculture is an essential sector of activity for developing countries, which are at the mercy of large groups that impose their own fertilisers and seeds, which are dangerous to health and ruinous in financial terms. In France too, vineyards and cereal-growing areas are being bought up by Chinese investors at rock-bottom prices.

The destruction of subsistence farming on the African continent is leading to the exile of many young people who will not be able to make a living from their crops. The race for profit is all the more reprehensible given that every human being needs food to survive.

Consumption habits need to be re-examined; the development of transport and the growing range of products on offer, thanks to well-orchestrated advertising, have led to an increase in long-distance consumption since the post-war period. As a result, we find it natural to eat all the products we want, often exotic ones, whatever the season. A recent awakening is that consumer habits are changing, with seasonal products grown as close to home as possible, thus avoiding the transport costs that add to the cost and damage the ecological balance (air transport in particular). Short supply chains are favoured, and associations such as the AMAP have been set up to bring together local producers and consumers. As well as protecting the environment and having products whose origin and quality are known, local producers are favoured over large central purchasing agencies.

AVENUES FOR THE FUTURE

Taxation

The entire economic system should be overhauled, based on Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal system (1933-1938), with a higher top tax rate and a more appropriate progressive tax system.

Tax revenue is the largest item in public budgets and concerns all citizens, whose contribution remains essential; tax must therefore no longer be seen as a punishment but as a necessary contribution to the functioning of public structures. Equality is one of the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights, which must underpin all laws. Generally speaking, any form of taxation is seen as a form of abuse of power, which stems from the inequity of tax systems in France. For example, we

have reduced the number of tax brackets from fourteen to five, which penalises the middle classes and favours the richest. With this system, the richest have become even richer and the poorest poorer. Progressive taxation is an instrument of democracy and social justice, which is why making everyone in France subject to income tax would be a sound and fair measure.

We need to tax annuities more than earned income, and tax corporate capital gains. At present, capital income is taxed at just 12.5%.

We need to review the ISF (wealth tax) tax base, which is currently based solely on real estate; income from securities is not included, especially as the argument put forward for the expected trickle-down effect does not hold water, as the sums saved by the richest do not trickle down to the poorest. What's more, this system is philosophically unacceptable: the poorest people are not looking for disguised charity, but fairness.

Indirect taxes are particularly unfair because they hit the rich and the poor equally. The VAT system should be reviewed by exempting certain basic products and extending the reduced rate (2.10%) to all essential products.

We need to reduce fuel taxes, which are unfair because they are proportional to the price of oil; to do this, we need to reinstate the floating TIPP, which allows us to avoid passing on the impact of rising oil prices. All fuels, such as jet fuel, should be taxed in the same way.

There is a need for a massive fight against tax evasion or tax avoidance that is tolerated. The problem is not confined to France, and international agreements are needed to combat it. At present, measures are limited to a small number of G8 or G20 countries. Senator Éric Bocquet has proposed the creation of a tax COP to standardise laws and procedures, restore fairness and prevent the tax evasion to which many countries are subject. He advocated redefining the role of major institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, and registering these projects with the UN to bring together its one hundred and ninety-three member states.

The fight against tax havens also involves standardising the banking system, which presupposes concerted action at European and even global level by harmonising taxation. The most blatant example of the difficulty of implementation is the tax on monetary transactions envisaged as early as 1972 by James Tobin. Never implemented, it was revived and proposed to be extended to all financial transactions by the Attac association. Attempts to standardise the tax at European level have failed, and it has been postponed until 2024. France introduced a tax on financial transactions (FTT) in 2012, but only a global application can have a real impact.

Money must be limited to its function of exchange, not speculation

We should therefore abolish the stock exchange, which creates unhealthy competition between companies that are on it and those that are not. Stock market speculation is based on a lack of transparency; the market operates on anticipation and opacity, not on real value. On the stock market, what is traded are not assets but expectations of gains; no expert ever knows the date of the stock market turning points, otherwise he would be a billionaire. Only insiders, in other words crooks, can anticipate the thresholds. Stock market speculation has ruined certain countries and benefited only a small number of shareholders.

Companies' need for money can only be financed by bonds and loans, not by shares, which generate an idea of risk and unhealthy calculations. We see too many large companies making substantial profits which are redistributed in the form of dividends

to shareholders, to the disregard of employees and necessary investments, in particular to improve the fate of workers.

As money is necessary for the economy to function, we need to encourage the creation of solidarity banks where the funds deposited would not be intended for speculation, but would be used to implement solidarity and ecological projects presented by individuals or organisations with limited resources.

Reconsidering international economic treaties

Treaties have not benefited the poorest, but are always negotiated to favour the powerful, such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) or the various European treaties. We therefore need to think about fair agreements that take into account the well-being of all populations, under the aegis of an international organisation such as the WTO.

The law of supply and demand

This principle needs to be reviewed because, as it stands, it is not a balancing factor and social well-being has never been proven. This law encourages sometimes unhealthy competition, with explosive and destructive consequences. We need to determine global aggregate demand, i.e., the sum of demand from households to consume, from businesses to invest and from governments to operate, and limit ourselves to this without creating artificial demand or fictitious needs.

Reconsidering indicators

GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is rising, while the share of wages in GDP is falling and the share of the richest people is exploding. Some "utopians" advocate measuring the happiness and satisfaction of human beings through access to health, education, culture and security under the term GDH (Gross Domestic Happiness).

Reconsidering free trade

Economic exchanges are essential in a modern world where protectionism is no longer appropriate; however, this must not lead to the imposition of conditions favourable to the powerful to the detriment of poor countries. We need to regulate in this area and protect local production, because industrialists are always keen to acquire raw materials at lower cost.

Reviewing the arms trade

Progressive disarmament is part of an overall process of awareness-raising and changing attitudes. As well as putting a heavy burden on public budgets to the detriment of other interventions, the trade in weapons induces sometimes troubles.

Pacts have already been made. During the Cold War, the two world superpowers, the USA and the USSR, concluded agreements to reduce the arms race, the Salt agreements (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks): Salt 1 concluded in 1972 and Salt II in 1979. These agreements on limiting and controlling the production of strategic weapons were followed by the Start I and II strategic arms reduction treaties, signed in 1991 and 1993 with the aim of destroying the most dangerous weapons. The aim was also to reduce military arsenals by means of other treaties specifying and supplementing the initial treaties.

Further action was taken under the aegis of the UN to extend these measures to all countries. The signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, after complex negotiations, was the culmination of the international

community's efforts. This treaty establishes the principle of a total ban on nuclear weapons tests, including peaceful nuclear explosions. Recalcitrant and belligerent countries that have not signed any convention still have to be converted. This will raise the question of the conversion of the arms industries.

Collectivisation or nationalisation of the means of production

The major means of production must belong either to the State, or to associations or workers' cooperatives whose sources of financing are either public or shared in the form of bonds rather than shares.

There are areas in which the search for profit must not prevail, such as the supply of energy, water, rail and motorway transport, and everything to do with health and education, which must be managed rigorously by public bodies, without any profit aim, even accepting that sometimes such areas of activity may be loss-making because they contribute to people's well-being or safety. This would mean nationalising energy sources, subsoil resources, insurance companies, major banks and everything to do with transport infrastructure, railways and motorways.

The privatisation of motorways in France has enabled the seven motorway companies to reap huge profits, with an average margin of 34.7% (compared with 6% for CAC 40 companies), while imposing increasingly harsh working conditions. The privatisation of GDF and the reduction in the workforce have forced the group's companies to subcontract under sub-optimal conditions (lack of qualifications), even though the consequences can be disastrous. For example, the privatisation of the rail networks in the United Kingdom has led to malfunctions and tragic accidents.

The pursuit of profit means developing only what is profitable; for example, small railway lines have been closed, causing real harm to the inhabitants of small towns, forcing users to use a car, an expensive solution that is discriminatory and harmful to the environment.

Limiting outsourcing

The State and local authorities are increasingly outsourcing tasks to private bodies. While this is understandable in purely technical terms (digital, IT services), it is detrimental in terms of quality and very costly in the long term. Public service delegations and concessions put a long-term strain on public budgets without improving the service provided to citizens. So, for example, everything to do with healthcare cannot be entrusted to structures whose aim is to make a profit, sometimes to the detriment of quality.

Moreover, it is not certain that services managed by public authorities would necessarily be ruinous, as the absence of a profit motive is not incompatible with sound management. One example is the German city of Hamburg, which has taken over all the electricity, gas and heating distribution networks previously entrusted to the private sector, adopting renewable energies and maintaining financial equilibrium.

Regulating subsidies

The allocation of public subsidies and shareholdings to companies would need to be regulated, as many groups have obtained substantial public funding to set up factories in France, and have shamelessly relocated their activities (failure of the CICE (*Tax credit for competitiveness and employment*) in the previous five-year term). Public investment is sometimes necessary; it contributes to economic development and employment by encouraging investors. However, these payments must be subject to controls and sanctions, in terms of the use of funds and the long-

term viability of the company. Similarly, priority should be given to supporting the social economy.

In the field of labour

Labour is not a product like any other; it is an activity that is essential to the construction of social identity. At the moment, the logic of large private companies is to set a level of dividends and adapt work accordingly, with no regard for the well-being of workers, sometimes leading to tragedies (the wave of suicides at France Télécom). We therefore need to put in place a system that protects workers (a law and not collective agreements specific to each sector) and makes company directors accountable. For example, we could:

- Reduce working hours to free up time for culture and for maintaining social, family and community links. Since the early days of industrialisation, working hours have been falling inexorably, with automation requiring a smaller but more skilled workforce. The four-day week is no utopia.
- raise the minimum social benefits and the minimum wage guaranteeing a decent standard of living, work is not assistance, all employees have the right to dignity and must receive fair remuneration for their efforts.
- review pay differentials and set a reasonable ratio by involving all workers in the company's profits through employee profit-sharing.
- give greater resources to training to adapt work to the abilities of each individual and to changes linked to technological developments.
- stimulate recovery through energy transition, a sort of Marshall Plan for the climate that would help to reduce unemployment.

More money should be invested in education and the health professions, in particular by improving salaries; at present, the defence budget in France is higher than the education budget. The purpose of these two sectors, health and education, is not to generate profits but to provide citizens with a quality education and equal access to healthcare, free from the influence of the pharmaceutical lobbies.

The right to housing

We need to establish a genuine right to housing and stop people sleeping rough, free up vacant housing and force local authorities to build social housing, and requisition empty housing. Rents need to be regulated, particularly in towns with high demand, to prevent overbidding and discriminatory pricing.

Economics and morality

Economics must become a moral science. The economy has become financialised when it should be working for the good of all. In his theory, Keynes intended to subject the economy to ethics; we must fight against the opacity of modern economies where aid is sometimes recycled by mafia groups. The neo-liberal turnaround seen in many democracies, particularly in France over the last thirty years, has led to unemployment, a social divide, and a situation of despair for some people, fomenting revolt.

To get people to support a fair system, we need to focus on education of citizenship, to educate and raise awareness of what is at stake in society as a whole, and not just the interests of one social, socio-professional or geographical category, by combating human nature's tendency towards selfishness and categorical fallback. We all need

to be made aware of this.

As the Republic is everybody's business, every citizen has rights and duties: the right to participate in sovereignty by directly electing their representatives, and the duty to comply with the laws passed by their representatives. In an economic system where profits and speculation predominate, the consumer's attitude is crucial in raising awareness. By turning away from a consumerist society through judicious and limited purchases, citizens will undermine the expected profits, the sole concern of investors.

CONCLUSION

We need to make people understand that they are all citizens, that they are all involved in politics, even if they don't vote or don't seem to be interested in public affairs, because depending on our lifestyles, our modes of consumption, transport and education, we make choices that have consequences for a country's economy and for the decisions taken by its leaders.

The transformation of the economic system will take place gradually, in the midst of opposition, struggles and difficulties, as with all the advances that have marked the history of the planet. As Jean Jaurès said, "*Courage means going for the ideal and understanding reality*". It means taking the current situation into consideration and looking realistically and decisively at how things can evolve and reform in order to establish an altruistic and egalitarian society.

Chapter 7

ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

GLOBAL WARMING

According to specialists and meteorologists, the question often arises as to the true origin of the climate change observed over the last thirty years or more. One thing is becoming clear to most of them, and that is that there is a natural phenomenon of climate disruption corresponding to a cycle, just as there have been periods of glaciation and warming in the past. The Spirits had already warned us of this natural change some thirty years ago, while specifying that humanity should remain very vigilant about its own harmful effects from various forms of pollution.

What is disturbing for our contemporaries, however, is the speed with which the ice is melting in the polar zones and in our mountains, suggesting that climate change can be very rapid, whereas past models seem to show us that changes are much slower on the time scale. Be that as it may, if we are to accept the inescapable postulate of natural global warming, we need to see how and why human activities are likely to exacerbate the process, which, on closer examination, also seems obvious when biologists tell us that we have lost 60% of our biodiversity since 1970.

From a spiritist point of view, another factor also needs to be taken into account, that of the psychic influence of humans on their natural environment, which is discussed in the following lines.

SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE

The planet has undergone its own geological evolution over 4.5 billion years. It was a slow process of mineral construction, followed by vital construction through the presence of water. The Spirits have always played a part in this slow process, providing the impetus for the formation of landforms.

The Earth's metamorphoses did not happen by themselves, but by successive divine or spiritual impulses.

As far as the emergence of life is concerned, we can use the expression used by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to describe transformism as "an increasing complexity of species". From the first amoeba and the first unicellular elements to man, there are successive stages that did not arise ex nihilo by the operation of the Holy Spirit (according to that old formula), but nevertheless by the operation of spiritual forces that participated in the transformations that were first mineral and then vital with plants and animals. And finally, a humanoid kingdom came into being through the incarnation of spirits who helped a simian animal species to evolve and gradually become Homo sapiens, having passed through various forms (Australopithecus, Pithecanthrope, Neanderthal and others).

Throughout all these developments, there was constant geological activity as tectonic plates crossed and collided, shaping the land masses, the continents, in perpetual motion in what is known as continental drift. This has occurred over very long timescales, along with the slow phenomena of erosion, glaciation and climatic variations. In addition, seismic and volcanic activity (and even large meteorite impacts) have produced more rapid changes in a very short space of time. Volcanoes may have caused islands or mountains to emerge suddenly, creating new landforms, while the very slow continental drift continued imperceptibly over millions of years.

THE ROLE OF THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

So, there's geological activity going on all by itself, but at the same time, spiritual forces have always played a part in these slow evolutions.

Another more recent factor that has contributed to this change is the human factor. The progressive settlement of the Earth has given rise to the presence of incarnate beings with varying degrees of consciousness, but also instinctive survival reactions, which have given rise to a seizure of power over nature, which had to be domesticated through agriculture and animal breeding. And on a spiritual level, human beings have also built up a vast collective unconscious with their feelings of domination, jealousy and hatred, but also of solidarity and love. This is a force of a psychic nature that can have repercussions on the Earth's physical structure and climate. This is an important spiritist fact that is totally misunderstood, even rejected. And yet it is a significant influence of the collective unconscious, which can be compared with psychokinesis or the action of thought on matter. Psychokinesis is obviously a voluntary and conscious action in the desired experience, such as twisting a steel bar or moving an object without physical contact. But we also know that psychokinesis involves letting go of an influence that then becomes unconscious. It is mainly at the unconscious level that the will finds its mode of action. From there, we can extrapolate this experience to a possible influence of the collective human unconscious on matter, on the environment. A particularly altered collective unconscious could contribute to climate change, or even an earthquake or volcanic eruption. Collective psychic alteration often corresponds to people suffering from hunger, conflict or war.

Of course, these natural phenomena exist in their own right, within the physical constraints of an Earth in perpetual motion. Obviously, altered mentalities, whether warlike or otherwise, are not going to cause cataclysms on their own, but they will contribute to certain disturbances. Altered collective psyches will simply amplify or aggravate natural phenomena, making them greater and more destructive. So, this is a new concept, but one that has also occurred to certain scientists who are currently working on a subject that has some resonance with what has just been said.

This is *the* Global Consciousness Project.

In the early 1980s, experimental results at the Psychophysical Research Laboratories suggested to researchers that subjects had an effect not only on the RNGs (random number generators) on which they were concentrating, but also on 'hidden' RNGs.

This initial observation was taken up and developed by Roger Nelson, of Princeton University, in situation groups, for example holotropic breathing groups (a therapy and personal development technique developed by the psychiatrist Stanislav Grof). He noticed that the results of the RNG had a particular profile, specific to the most intense emotional moments, and not to moments of rest (for example, during the facilitator's explanations or during breaks).

Going a step further, Dean Radin, from the University of Nevada, came up with the idea of using RNGs to test large-scale unconscious collective phenomena. His hypothesis was that people dispersed in space but focused on the same object of attention - a television programme, for example - could react unconsciously in a coherent way, and therefore simultaneously disrupt the RNGs.

In fact, an experiment carried out during the 67^e Oscars ceremony resulted in major disturbances (the RNG data deviated from the random baseline) on several RNGs operating during the live broadcast of the show - at times corresponding to peaks of

interest.

The GCP, or Global Consciousness Project, was born of two observations. The first is that a random number generator placed in the middle of a group of people engaged in the same activity can reflect the overall attention paid by the group to that activity; the second is that the Internet now makes it possible to set up a network experiment on a very large scale. The idea behind the GCP, subsidised by the American foundation Institute of Noetic Sciences, is to network a large number of RNGs around the world, in order to uncover the possible impact and contamination of intense events on the collective psyche. These RNGs

, which operate around the clock, transfer their data to the PEAR Lab at Princeton University, which is responsible for carrying out the analyses. Some twenty computers have already been installed in Holland, Switzerland, Germany and the United States, and the results have been very encouraging.

*In France, the IMI (Institut Métapsychique International) * has had this device since the end of 1999, and is thus an important 'node' in this project to measure the flow of collective consciousness ('global consciousness').*

Of course, this study, which aims to demonstrate the relationships between individuals in a form of collective consciousness, does not go as far as the unconscious influence of this psyche on matter, but it is already a good starting point for perhaps going further one day. Given that parapsychology also studies the action of psychokinesis in people like Jean-Pierre Girard and other experimenters, the link could be made between alterations in collective thought and the possible influence of this thought on seismic or climatic upheavals in nature.

*<http://www.metapsychique.org/le-global-consciousness-project/>

HUMAN ACTIVITIES

Added to this, of course, are the concrete human activities that contribute to the disruption of the planet. For example, nuclear testing to develop a new atomic weapon can have serious consequences. These are now test explosions, often underground, releasing so much energy that they have inevitable geological repercussions, vibrating the ground and subsoil and possibly inducing seismic tremors. Not to mention the inevitable release of radioactivity, as in the case of the French tests at Mururoa, which, until 1996, caused great concern among the populations concerned and led to fierce hostility in environmental circles.

Human activity also includes industry, intensive agriculture, greenhouse gases from heating and all forms of transport, all of which produce considerable pollution. And this too can lead to serious climate disruption.

These disruptions have become evident in recent years. There has been talk of the El Niño phenomenon linked to the warming of the oceans. The combined interactions of ocean currents and winds linked to changes in temperature produce cyclones and hurricanes of increasing intensity and frequency. This is the problem of global warming, as seen in the melting of the glaciers in our mountains in just a few years, and above all the rapid melting of the polar ice caps in the Arctic and Antarctic, which is likely to lead to an inexorable rise in sea levels.

If the phenomenon of global warming is part of nature's cycles, the acceleration of the phenomenon tells us that human activity must also have something to do with it. Neither can be denied, and in any case, there are enough studies on the subject to force us to conclude that the degradation of nature has been accelerated by human activity.

The industrial era began two centuries ago. The increase in road and air transport, which produces pollution and greenhouse gases, has accelerated rapidly in recent decades. So, we need to find cleaner means of propulsion and clean energies, and that's the challenge facing carmakers in the future.

The new prospects for nuclear power

To meet the planet's energy needs, the Spirits told us about a future prospect that scientists are already thinking about: non-polluting nuclear fusion, which can guarantee unlimited production.

The first experiments in this field have shown that this is possible, but at the cost of a considerable expenditure of conventional energy to obtain this famous fusion for a fraction of a second, because an incredible amount of heat has to be produced to achieve the phenomenon. We're talking about 150 million degrees, equivalent to the temperature of the sun's core.

The scientific programme for the *tokamak* device is continuing, and is about to take on a new, more powerful form through the ITER project, with the final phases of construction on the Cadarache site in Provence. Thirty-four countries are involved in this programme, the first results of which are expected by 2050, although there is no certainty that by then we will have sufficiently mastered nuclear fusion to produce unlimited energy.

The Spirits said that by the action of thought, the necessary heat source could be produced and would allow nuclear fusion at will, solving the energy problem.

However, we don't know how this would work. It would undoubtedly require good, well-trained psychokinesists, capable of directing their thoughts and coordinating all this with the high technology essential for this kind of operation. We are not talking about fiction here, but about a futuristic vision that would obviously presuppose a prerequisite: acceptance of the forces of the spirit, and then agreeing to engage in precise experimental work with the help of the disembodied. And all of this in a humanistic, altruistic frame of mind, and with a sense of sharing for all, by not falling back into quarrels of competition and rivalry between the countries producing this new energy.

While we wait for this prospect, which a priori would require better understanding between human beings and between States, we will no doubt continue for a long time to come with the projections that are already in the pipeline with the new energies of wind, solar, geothermal and tidal power, not forgetting hydroelectric power from dams, which has already proved its worth but which poses other serious problems in terms of environmental damage.

One of the first measures should be to stop producing energy from coal. Switching from nuclear power to coal, as Germany has done, is a false good idea, since the problem of radioactive waste has now become one of air pollution. As for envisaging the end of nuclear fission, and therefore of existing power stations, the replacement solutions will be inadequate for a long time to come. And if we have to move in this direction, it's mainly because the burial of radioactive waste provokes hostility from local populations, as in Bures in Lorraine, where the inhabitants don't want it deep underground. What's more, accidents like Chernobyl and Fukushima raise questions about the reliability of this type of energy production. Having said that, we need to put these two cases into perspective; the first points to major negligence and the second to the issue of siting in a highly seismic region close to the coast.

Other, more drastic solutions are sometimes envisaged, such as those proposed by proponents of degrowth. By consuming less, eliminating superfluous needs and striving for a simpler life for all, energy consumption would be reduced, which is totally illusory insofar as it is growing economic development that keeps the world going, something that none of the world's major states would wish to call into question. Some, like the United States, abuse their unbridled consumption of these energies. But other emerging or developing countries, such as China, which are already advanced, will continue to forge ahead because we always think in terms of economic powers competing with each other. And when Africa as a whole emerges economically, it is not this that will make the desire for prosperity, which is perfectly legitimate, recede.

The only thing that can go in the right direction is for the emerging countries, taking into account the abuses of the developed countries, to be more reasonable in their own expansion, because you don't need to consume as much as an American to live happily.

Messages about nuclear power

Here is a message from the spirit of Paul Langevin, received in 1987, who is not turning his back on nuclear energy, seeing great prospects for the future as explained above about fusion.

The atomic energy that so frightens humanity is a spiritual force in which I see a great future. Many planets are already using the atom for peaceful purposes to benefit their inhabitants. Atomic propulsion for cars, planes and ships will mean no pollution and no economic crisis at the source of production. There is no doubt in my mind that research should be directed towards thermonuclear fusion.

What could be more natural than for a living being with an atomic physical structure to live according to the energies at the source of that structure? All too often, people equate atomic weapons with the peaceful and beneficial energy of nuclear power. In the history of humanity, all energies have had military applications; it is a question of establishing a moral choice and not of condemning an energy. The atom can give mankind a liberation it has never known before; it can enable us to reduce our working hours, particularly in industries where labour is often difficult; it can enable us to develop space technology that puts us on the doorstep of other universes; it can enable us to create different materials for therapeutic purposes. I'm thinking in particular of the cockpit. In reality, mankind is only just discovering the atom, hence the fear we may have of it.

I don't agree with the accusations that are being made against nuclear power stations. The only real problem is to find a suitable way of converting nuclear waste. This will be discovered in the decades to come. By getting closer to the atom, man is getting closer to the universal vibration, in other words to the spirit. A force that is still poorly understood and not always mastered, a force for evil when used for military purposes, the atom must become the Earth's energy for the betterment of all the souls that will inhabit it in the future. That is my wish.

Another Spirit, who goes by the name of Xerias, has come to answer the following question: "In the light of the past and with a view to the 21st century, what is the future of human technology?"

The question posed to the invisible world once again implies the fundamental notion of evolution.

Technology will continue to advance on planet Earth, so much so that man will one day be able to visit other inhabited worlds. In this sense, we can affirm a certain confidence in your technological future.

The fundamental principle of all scientific development is, however, linked to an indispensable moral requirement, which is why it would be too early to say that all the forms given to technical progress will be peaceful.

The discovery of nuclear fusion and its application may enable man to visit outer space; it may also enable him to invent new destructive weapons. This is why the spiritist ideal, with its thirst for justice and peace, is so important in this area.

Man is on the threshold of great technical discoveries, and faced with this prospect, may souls of goodwill be called upon to give mastery to these discoveries. All peoples must benefit from technological progress, and in the face of this necessity the question remains entirely open.*

*Souls of good will: according to the interpretation we can give to this formula, these souls of goodwill are perhaps the disembodied spirits who will be brought to participate in the science of the future, coming to give the necessary indications to obtain nuclear fusion, in a society which will have accepted the existence of the other world, in a scientific collaboration between the living and the dead.

From COP 21 to COP 25

Under the aegis of the United Nations, from one annual conference to the next, from Paris in 2015 to Madrid in 2019, the initiatives underway are far from sufficient; they simply have the merit of existing. Today, we need to take drastic measures as a matter of urgency, from one day to the next, to try to reduce the damage to the planet. But that doesn't seem possible, because it always takes time to change production and consumption patterns. What's more, some countries are moving in the right direction, while others don't want to change a thing. Be that as it may, and despite the shortcomings and obstacles, we must at least support what is already being done, and above all not say, as we so often hear, that existing advances are pointless. What is being done is largely insufficient, yes, but doing nothing would be even worse.

We must also count on the expression of young people who are thinking about the future and who are demonstrating all over the world to challenge the powers that be on the issue of the environment. This is where the greatest pressure will come from, to ensure that urgent issues are finally taken seriously and that multilateral measures are imposed on the world's most recalcitrant leaders.

Spirituality to help preserve the planet

Well-directed positive thought can also be an instrument of struggle. A fluidic chain can have its effects, because combined with the actions of disembodied spirits, it can act on the earth's crust, on climates, for example to lessen an earthquake or slow down and deflect a hurricane.

Spirituality is also, more prosaically and obviously, an awareness that already exists, which can lead to actions such as the creation of cooperatives that organise short circuits from producer to consumer. Local initiatives can reduce the need for international trade in products, and we need to encourage the food crops that Jean Ziegler has been talking about for a long time in African countries.

In the following message, the spirit of Léon Denis speaks to us about the relationship that exists between the unleashed natural elements and the psyche of Earthlings, independently of any divine will:

People often ask themselves the following question: Why did God allow this earthquake? Why did God allow this cyclone, this tidal wave? Why did God allow this drought?

In reality, in their ignorance, for which religion is largely responsible, mankind has not understood the total absence of any relationship between God and these events. To tell them that they are responsible for these events is something that their conscience will have difficulty admitting for a long time to come, and yet that is the truth. Human thought reflects a generally negative evolution. The blue planet is still an inferior planet. Thought is a fluid that becomes evil if it is the vehicle of pride, hatred and all the instinctive baseness of inferiority. If man elevates his thinking, he elevates his planet and, by the same token, modifies his environment.

All the natural cataclysms suffered by the Earth are relative to its degree of evolution. Thought must therefore convey new data: love, strength in the constructive idea. Fluidic chains could modify the granite crust of the globe if they were extended to millions of people. What's more, the world beyond man is still too inferior and has a negative influence on your planet. So, change is topical.

I'm sure it will happen. For man to transform his soil and his sky, he must first transform himself, without blaming God.

In this more complex message received in 1987, the spirit of Paul Langevin establishes the correlation between our incarnated spirits and the matter that surrounds us. He also indicates how, through the evolution of humanity, matter will be transformed to keep pace with this spiritual progress:

"Matter, as you experience it in your physical bodies and as you know it in your surroundings, is thought matter, the result of a universal creative direction. It is also a transformable matter that carries a set of energies that will be the mechanism of its transformation..."

The original construction of the earth's material retains its one and only source. You are the authors of your vibration; you are responsible for your surrounding world. Physicists can and must study the structure, but they alone cannot change it, because the transformation of the structure depends on the evolution of your spirits. This is how thought, evolving slowly within the totality of your progressive reflection, will give rise to different forms, to a new archetype, to a different function. The metabolism of the cellular function will be transformed even in the radiations given by the impulse of your psyche going to meet the Omega point of its superiority.

The metamorphosis of matter is therefore the future of every incarnate entity. Other worlds prove this, either by the heaviness of their states within their inferiority, or by the finesse and ether of their forms for the superior worlds. To think well therefore means to create and form well. The formations will be different, the creations will be the result of an intelligence that is refined within the incarnation, the necessity of the spirit's contact with matter.

Matter and spirit will merge, not in their history as is still established today, but in their future. Already guessed by some of my colleagues on Earth, hope is thus born and a man of physics becomes a man of metaphysics for the benefit of his living God recognised at the level of the simple and marvellous intelligent behaviour of the atom."

SHALE GAS

Shale gas is a natural gas contained in marl or clay rock rich in organic matter. Unlike natural gas, which is held in permeable rock that is easy to exploit, shale gas is

located in the pores of the rock. This makes it particularly difficult to extract, requiring the systematic use of the combined techniques of directional drilling and hydraulic fracturing, which are very costly.

Shale gas reserves are substantial and spread across every continent. The United States was the first country to exploit them, and the quantities obtained have made it possible to significantly limit imports of natural gas. However, the problems associated with its extraction, particularly from an environmental point of view, have led to mistrust of this energy source. Extracting this gas requires intensive use of water reserves and the use of chemicals which, when mixed with the water, eventually rise to the surface. There is also pollution through the emission of greenhouse gases (CO₂).

In France, there has been a moratorium on shale gas exploration and production since 2013, and hydraulic fracturing is banned.

Although barely tested, there are other methods of fracturing (or cracking), the most environmentally friendly of which is the injection of propane gas, avoiding the use of water and chemicals. In Canada, the company GasFrac is experimenting with this technique for small-scale production, which is very promising, but it is still too early to say whether it is definitively valid.

The United States are continuing to use hydraulic fracturing, which has considerably lowered the water table, produced significant pollution and caused land subsidence that can lead to small earthquakes. Their aim is to achieve energy independence by 2030, which has already enabled them to revive local industry and employment, since the gas, obtained locally, enables a new industry to produce materials such as paints and plastics.

The spirit of Ferdinand de Lesseps, who will be quoted later, tells us that shale gas represents a future that we should not fear, and that will ensure a post-oil future.

However, the major issue of immediate concern is that of hydraulic fracturing, which will have to be replaced by non-polluting methods that already exist, and which need to be developed without further delay.

It should also be noted that oil companies are exploiting shale gas (and also shale or sandstone oil) and this opportunistic diversification will continue to ensure their prosperity in the future, when conventional oil and gas run out. Which is why these wealthy consortia would be well advised to experiment with the cleanest methods of extraction. It also tells us that these companies always manage to bounce back, adapt and reinvent themselves, retaining their economic and financial supremacy, this time from a new black gold.

GMOs

GMOs are living organisms (animals, plants or micro-organisms) whose genetic make-up has been modified by man to give them new properties. They are used in a variety of sectors, including medicine, agriculture and the food industry. The main technique used to design GMOs, transgenesis, is the integration of a gene from a given plant into another plant to give it a desired characteristic. Other processes exist, such as mutagenesis, but only transgenesis is governed by European regulations.

In the case of maize, its modification by transgenesis has made it possible to combat the corn borer, which was wreaking havoc on crops. As a result, considerable losses due to this disease have been avoided. Researchers looking into the problem of mycotoxins, toxic substances secreted by microscopic fungi that affect crops, have found that transgenic maize contains almost 30% fewer mycotoxins. GMOs make it

possible to limit losses and thus increase yields. However, they are far from universally accepted by the scientific community and environmentalists alike. But as always, it is difficult to know the exact impact of these new techniques.

In 2016, a collective of over one hundred Nobel Laureates issued this statement: *"All scientific and regulatory agencies around the world have repeatedly and consistently established that crops and foods improved through biotechnology are as safe, if not safer, than those derived from any other production method. There has never been a single confirmed case of a negative health outcome for humans or animals due to their consumption. Their environmental impact has been repeatedly shown to be less damaging to the environment and they represent an opportunity for biodiversity worldwide."*

Some international policymakers, such as the FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation), are considering this solution as a way of combating world hunger, which is on the rise again as a result of climate change.

While there's no question of playing sorcerer's apprentice, it's not too far-fetched to think about this issue. There is no need to fear GMOs. Science, technology and research are progressing on Earth, with the aim of offering solutions so that every human being can be properly nourished in terms of quantity and quality. It would be advisable to develop research in this sector in an impartial way and to apply the results as soon as we are certain of their authenticity after studies carried out by independent and disinterested structures. This could make it possible to avoid using certain products such as herbicides, which have disastrous consequences for humans and nature.

In this respect, there are still some little-known and highly innovative natural solutions to be found; for example, an alternative to pesticides has recently been developed thanks to a system that converts molecular structures into music, known as *genodics*. This theory, demonstrated by Joël Sternheimer, can have a positive influence on plants, and has proved its worth in Alsace vineyards.

THE PROBLEM OF A GREEN AFRICA

Africa, a continent so exploited and robbed by rich countries at the time of colonisation, abounds in natural resources and human wealth. At the same time, drought-related famines occur regularly, causing the deaths of thousands of people as the lack of water prevents crops from growing. In order to remedy the recurring drought, various projects have been envisaged; for example, the idea of a Great Green Wall was born in 2002 during the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. The idea was approved at the seventh session of the Conference of African Leaders and Heads of Government in 2007. The Great Green Wall (GGW) for the Sahara and Sahel aims to combat the effects of climate change and desertification. Developed by the African Union, it aims to transform the lives of millions of people by creating a mosaic of green and productive ecosystems in North Africa, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. This 7,800 km wall will cross the entire African continent, passing through twelve countries and linking Dakar to Djibouti.

The project is managed by the Pan-African Agency for the Great Green Wall, the APMV, set up in 2010 by eleven Sahel-Saharan states.

A forest cover would bring more humidity, provide nutrients for the soil and thus constitute a fodder reserve for livestock. By helping to improve the incomes of local populations, the Great Green Wall helps to counter the combined effects of the degradation of natural resources and drought in rural areas. While helping to mitigate the effects of climate change, it should also improve food security in these countries.

This Green Africa project is a subject of concern to enlightened spirits who, from the afterlife, continue to reflect on and hope for solutions for the irrigation of this vast continent.

In this way, the disembodied try to influence the living to come up with new ideas to overcome natural obstacles and come to the aid of people in certain countries whose lives are under threat.

Ferdinand de Lesseps is still famous for having directed the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869, which enabled Europe to reach Asia without bypassing Africa. In 1879, he undertook the construction of the Panama Canal, linking the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. In 1995, his spirit expressed itself on this subject: "The canal was dug, it was an additional link between men. It still is, but my heart has often been saddened by the thought of its position and its use in war. Men must continue to dig canals in the sense of contact, without ever believing for a moment that they are the owners."

Along with other scientific spirits from the beyond, he imagined another Africa, a green Africa with few deserts, large meadows and expanses of crops, to satisfy happy inhabitants; and to achieve this, he imagined the construction of large canals whose water would be drawn from the sea and the ocean, sucked up and filtered, made drinkable for watering and consumption by the inhabitants. This would make it possible to irrigate part of Africa, initially near the coasts, provided of course that there is substantial investment in seawater desalination plants, as is already the case in several countries such as Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Israel and the United States. This could be achieved elsewhere, with substantial financial and technical cooperation from the richest countries. And since China is investing so much in Africa, wouldn't this be a good idea for it, not in terms of economic colonisation, but in terms of cooperation in a fair exchange that is profitable for both sides?

CITIZEN AWARENESS

Everyone on Earth, rich or poor, is affected by the environment, or is likely to be one day, because climate change does not stop at borders. Cataclysms, hurricanes, floods and heatwaves spare no one, and while for years we paid scant attention to the consequences of our lifestyles and their impact on the environment, the emergence of real problems linked to pollution, global warming and the damage caused by agriculture that has been converted to pesticides has raised awareness among many people and led to changes in our lifestyles and consumption patterns.

Young people in particular, who are 'inheriting' a threatened planet, have become aware of the urgent need to change the way we look at things and the way we behave. What's more, some of these recently reincarnated spirits have made it their mission to campaign and work to save the planet, like Greta Thunberg, a young Swedish woman of seventeen who campaigns ardently and with conviction.

So, to varying degrees, we are all stakeholders in the quality of our environment and can get involved in civic action in different ways.

Awareness, while seemingly too late for some, is nonetheless very real. The climate marches and demonstrations are an example of this; their purpose is to call on the leaders of all countries to concern themselves with the problem of ecology, a major issue for the 21st century. It is deplorable that the leaders of the world's biggest countries and biggest polluters do not feel concerned by this issue. Increasingly frequent initiatives are being taken by private individuals to clean up their environment (forests, beaches, etc.).

So there are a whole range of things we can do on a daily basis that, when added together, will have a real impact: limiting and sorting waste, fighting against the waste of natural resources (water, for example), reducing the amount of consumer goods we buy by limiting our purchases to what is necessary and not succumbing to the siren song of advertising, buying preferably local and seasonal products, favouring short circuits such as AMAPS, consumer cooperatives or buying groups that are developing in towns and cities. In the face of disposable habits, we now need to rehabilitate older habits in order to limit packaging, avoid plastic and replace harmful detergents with natural products that are just as effective. Utensils, machines and even certain types of waste can be recycled. The recycling industry can thus be developed, creating new jobs, particularly in the social economy, which has invested in this sector with recycling centres of all kinds. Compost points are also being set up in towns and cities.

It is also essential to encourage people to limit their energy consumption, so we need to look at how we travel by car, by limiting its use, by car-sharing more, by using bicycles or by walking. This also necessarily involves efficient public transport policies in towns and cities and the creation of cycle paths. Similarly, rail transport should be preferred to air transport for short and medium distance journeys.

The countries of the northern hemisphere are the biggest polluters overall, but the impact of pollution is not limited to their borders, reaching the often-disadvantaged countries of the southern hemisphere. Ecology is therefore part of an altruistic approach to natural sharing and exchange, in the name of a spirituality that inhabits every living being. The United Nations has approved an action plan for the planet between now and 2030 that includes seventeen sustainable development objectives. We cannot ignore the problem on the grounds that we can live in peace for a few more decades, because apart from the fact that this attitude is perfectly selfish, we are preparing not only our children's Earth but also the Earth that we will return to tomorrow in another incarnation. Future generations are also ourselves, and our next life may take place in a country that we are currently exploiting or neglecting.

Climate justice is a new form of solidarity. In the years to come, there will be more and more climate refugees who will need to be welcomed and protected. Innovative solutions will have to be found for the good of all, because nature belongs to everyone. Natural resources such as water will have to become a right and a global common. This battle will inevitably be met with opposition from those who profit from a system in which finance predominates, but if all the world's citizens take responsibility and get involved, the end result will be a planet where everyone can live peacefully without fear of hunger, malnutrition, disease or displacement.

Ecology and human progress are inseparable.

Chapter 8

TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY FOR TOMORROW

By way of introduction, here is a message from the spirit of Charles de Gaulle received on 18 January 1986. The message reflects a constant in people's minds, that of a new, globalised society in which peoples who have become interdependent must find the path to cooperation and peace.

If this globalisation is increasingly effective in economic terms, it is still and always in the sense of competition and domination by the strongest and richest countries. Disparities and injustices have been transposed from the national to the multinational level, but the problem remains that the world continues to be at war over energy resources, industrial products and agricultural production for reasons of hegemony or competition.

So, here's this futuristic message, which ends with an allusion to André Malraux, referring to his famous formula: "The XXIst century will be spiritual or it won't be".

Good evening. The happiness of a single individual is inconceivable without the happiness of his brothers and sisters. The happiness of a country, of a homeland, is inconceivable without the happiness of the surrounding peoples. This is why it is no longer the time to defend, here or there, national or ethnic particularities. From the invisible world, from this world where I continue to live, to exist, to move forward, I am gradually guessing at the future meaning of what I would call earth democracy. A democracy in which every individual will have the right to his or her dignity as such, in which every personalised human being will contribute to planetary society. A society that is possible, a society that can be achieved in a very short space of time if the leaders of the nations are willing to move in that direction.

Progress is slow and involves difficulties, but above all a sense of decision and responsibility. In our time, we and others have awakened the old nations. We brought them out of their torpor of yesteryear. We wanted to modernise societies. Since then, the work has not been done in the desired direction. Political discourse increasingly prevails over real action, over the decision to be taken in this or that area. Spiritual strength must prevail. The spirit world is now giving hope to the metaphysical thinking of young people in every nation. Peace is born. It is often opposed, described as childish and naive. But this singular, original impulse is growing stronger and stronger, and that is why, in my present speech, on behalf of all those who are working for peace in the afterlife, I affirm, within this spiritist manifestation, that hope has at last been born. Happy, peaceful days, a source of freedom and creation, will not come suddenly, but we are on the eve of them. Malraux foresaw these tomorrows. I know that his premonitory truth will take shape.

Long live the XXth century of men reconciled in their dignity. I bid you farewell.

OLD AND NEW UTOPIAS

The so-called communist system has been a failure. Applied in the Soviet Union and a number of other countries, it no longer has any real representations and it unfortunately carries a heavy past if we think of periods such as those of Stalin or Pol Pot.

The philosopher and playwright Alain Badiou, who still calls himself a communist, acknowledges the failure of the so-called Marxist systems, which have not brought

happiness to the people, but he persists in thinking that communism is not dead, or at least that it must find other forms of expression. At the same time, it's clear that his argument stops there: he points out everything that's wrong, everything that's inhuman about capitalism, and then what? We see the philosopher asking questions, and that is the role of the philosopher, but as for answers, there are none other than to say that we need to find new models to achieve communism differently.

Others, trying to be more pragmatic, put forward the beginnings of solutions, which are not really revolutionary, but propose self-management through action, through the multiplication of local actions, in a form of grassroots democracy that will build itself without much need for administration. These are experiments that have already been carried out at local community level involving local agricultural production managed by small cooperatives that sell directly at a normal price, enabling producers to avoid all middlemen, and ultimately to sell their products at a decent price that enables them to live. These experiments are very promising, helping rural farmers to survive the inexorable laws of the market. In addition, these short circuits have the added advantage of meeting the ecological requirements of a reduced carbon footprint. So, producers and consumers have everything to gain, especially as most of the products involved are of known origin, and at best organic. There is one drawback, however, and that is that in some cases, prices can be significantly higher than those charged by supermarkets, certainly for better quality, but for products that are harder to get hold of on a low income.

This new mode of production-consumption is a new way of achieving fairer and greener development. But can it be generalised? That's the question. Can such a system be extended to a large region, to cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants? That's the direction we need to find, however, in these forms of self-management that reduce the number of intermediaries. And above all, this will require different consumption practices. Consuming better and differently, reducing meat consumption, but then paying attention to small producers, who are precisely in the meat industry, and there is no question of penalising them without supporting agricultural change.

If such an anti-system system were to become widespread, what would become of the major agri-food industries, and how could they be reconverted? What would become of the mass retail sector, which would also have to be converted? If there is a gradual move in this direction, we will have to readjust the whole way things work by looking at what the right forms of change will be.

Today's communists, and even more so the anarchists and libertarians, are looking in this direction for a theory of the future. Some even advocate the famous degrowth, i.e. a reduction in all unnecessary and superfluous production. Would this mean doing without all the new technologies that consume so much energy and also require us to exploit the mineral resources that provide the elements we need to manufacture our computers, smartphones and so on? We're probably not ready for a change in society that would be synonymous with a step backwards, but from an environmental point of view, the question of the durability of our devices and their recycling arises.

From this point of view, some countries are at the cutting edge of optimum recycling, while others continue to seriously pollute an already damaged environment.

In the future, therefore, we need to link a new economy to an essential ecological discipline, such as recycling ecology, which could be a source of new jobs.

DEMOCRACY AND HOW IT WORKS

Democratic utopias

Here and there we hear that we need to radically change the structures of power. And in a quasi-anarchist or libertarian vision, the organisation of power should be completely overhauled. The noble idea, already present during the French Revolution, is that of government of the people by the people. And the only good idea that has prevailed up to now is that the people should elect representatives, because an entire people obviously cannot govern, except by referendum, on every subject. This is the question of representative democracy, which some would like to replace with direct democracy.

Up until now, the people's representatives, deputies and senators, regional and municipal councillors, etc., have generally been professionals in politics, the organisation of society having become a profession. What's more, the idea that runs counter to this is that all these representatives come from the bourgeois class, or at the very least from the most privileged middle class (teachers, magistrates, liberal professions). Workers, white-collar and white-collar employees are virtually unrepresented.

To remedy this injustice, some people are considering a proposal: elect all the representatives of the people, no longer by a ballot in the ballot box, but by drawing lots - in other words, totally blind. And no former politician who has ever held office would be allowed to stand again. This would mean that to elect a Member of Parliament, for example, with a number determined in advance, people could put their name on a list, and a draw would select the lucky winner. Thus, according to the laws of chance, there would inevitably be a certain number of workers or employees from the humblest classes of the population among all the MPs.

What can we say about such a system, in which this time there would be no more professional politicians? But wouldn't these new councillors still have to learn some complex things about the organisation of a society, public finances, taxes, how the public service works, and much more besides? One of the promoters of this theory, Étienne Chouart, added that frequent popular referendums would be needed, and went even further, calling into question some of the gains made by our representatives in the past. For example, he advocated a referendum on the death penalty and another on the 1975 Veil law, on the pretext that in other times, these gains had only been obtained by parliament and not by the people.

This poses a real problem this time round, because the abolition of the death penalty by referendum was unlikely to be achieved in 1981, which means that the people's representatives can sometimes be wiser than the people themselves.

These same promoters of direct democracy are also in favour of a change of constitution, but normally in this case, the achievements of the past must be reintegrated into the new constitution: things like the universal declaration of human rights or the definitive abolition of the death penalty should be carried over from one constitution to another, otherwise it would mean starting all over again, and wiping out human achievements that represented a moral advance, at the risk of serious backward steps.

This form of governance of the people by the people would obviously be one of perfect and integral justice, responding to the notion of equality. But do we collectively have sufficient maturity to envisage such a form of popular governance? The problems of our modern societies are so complex that it is quite impossible to initiate new constitutions on this egalitarian basis. To manage a society in all its structures requires a minimum of professionalism, taking into account the experiences of the past and the problems of the present, which are often inextricable when it comes to funding and economic constraints in a globalised system where we are all interdependent.

At the stage of evolution that humanity has reached, it seems wiser to continue to live our democracies in a representative way, with elected representatives, in the old way, which does not prevent us from studying more modern and better adapted voting systems with, for example, a Senate drawn by lot. We can improve representativeness, particularly in the more local bodies. At national level, if there is universal suffrage for presidential and legislative elections, this is a significant step forward in democracy. And first of all, shouldn't we draw comparisons between the different constitutions of different countries, to see what is best in each of them? We need to look at what is most democratic in different countries, not to create a standard model, but to see how the experience of one country could be a source of inspiration for another.

Depending on the country, there are presidential (United States), semi-presidential (France) or parliamentary systems, all of which have their advantages and disadvantages. And depending on the culture, each country finds a system that suits it. In France, for example, accustomed as we are to a quasi-monarchical presidential system, would we really be comfortable with a strictly parliamentary system along the lines of the Nordic countries?

Whether constitutions have to be reviewed, revised or rewritten, this will undoubtedly be a way of changing the way societies are structured. But it is not yet possible to envisage a self-managed society in which each citizen would be fully responsible and co-responsible for the whole. What is feasible, however, on a local level, but on a national level, would be a later phase in the evolution to come, the phase of maturity in a higher level of intellectual and spiritual evolution that will bring the Earth closer to the higher worlds.

FROM CAPITALISM TO SOCIALISM

The exit from capitalism is a utopia that has been tried and applied in the form of various revolutions, and we need to assess the results of the past experiences of the USSR, China, Eastern Europe, Cuba and a few others. The final balance sheet is negative overall, insofar as this socialism (otherwise known as communism) took the form of dictatorships supported by the one-party formula, and in the end these countries left these systems to embrace the market economy.

While there was indeed collectivisation of the major means of production, particularly industrial ones, these countries were in reality living in the form of a market economy in the sense that their survival depended on world trade.

It was a kind of *state capitalism*, which meant that the communism applied in a country was not just based on improving the lives of its inhabitants, but on competition, not internal, but external, which was clearly seen between the USSR and the USA throughout the Cold War.

Moreover, the communist system confiscates democracy, being based on a single party that rules without any real elections. More recently, however, there have been a

few exceptions, with figures such as Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, who came to power by voting and whose revolutionary aims did not gag or ban opposition parties.

So, a system that would be both communist and democratic would presuppose the possibility of alternation in the event of victory for the opposition. And alternation then leads back to liberalism, after a short-lived communist phase, as was the case in the three cases mentioned above, but leading to great confusion in the case of Venezuela.

A project for tomorrow would also involve studying North-South relations. The southern hemisphere, and Africa in particular, has always been economically despoiled by Western consortia in terms of raw materials, rare minerals, oil and gas. After Europe, China is now colonising Africa using much the same methods, preventing African countries from developing on their own and for themselves.

Jean Ziegler* has been providing us with sufficiently clear information for a long time, referring to the food scandals in these regions. The first solutions he recommends are relatively simple: promote food crops in these countries to provide a self-sufficient traditional diet. And to achieve this, deforestation and the advance of the desert must be halted, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Cooperation from the countries of the North would be essential: buying petroleum products and minerals at the right price, gradually disengaging Western companies and employing local people at decent wages. On the political front, we need to help these countries to adopt genuine constitutions, whatever the model, so that they can move away once and for all from systems of influence such as that of Françafrique.

The Borloo plan to electrify the whole of Africa would be a good example of cooperation.

A simple solution was proposed in the 1990s by Jean-Marie Pelt** for Madagascar: provide small gas stoves to the population to stop the use of wood leading to deforestation, which would have cost almost nothing. This would have constituted at least the beginning of intelligent cooperation, with a view to moving on to real developments in North-South cooperation.

*Jean Ziegler (born 1934) is a Swiss sociologist and anti-globalisation activist, and UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

** Jean-Marie Pelt (1933-2015), pharmacist and botanist, teacher at the faculties of Nancy and Metz, founded the European Institute of Ecology in Metz.

The great powers

China has become an economic power on its way to becoming the world leader, closely followed by India, which is developing rapidly.

China is both communist in its system and capitalist in its economy. Freedom of expression is not on the agenda... But this country is a steamroller that no nation can fight any longer.

It is therefore necessary to negotiate at all levels. It is a peaceful country, but one that is waging a strictly economic war, the most effective, extending its network around the world without making a sound.

If we want to develop socialism with a human face, China is not going to help either, especially as abuses of all kinds continue there. At the very most, it is taking the measure of the ecological issues first and foremost of its own concern, and this is already a good step in the right direction. But as for the rest, how can we envisage a new world balance based on a China that will remain unavoidable?

We talk a lot about our Western countries, about the difficult relations with the Middle East, where war is being waged in the face of a peace that cannot be found, and meanwhile the Chinese market is weaving its web, peacefully, winning an economic war from which the Chinese people as a whole are not benefiting sufficiently.

China's rise to power will certainly be able to slow down and find a calmer cruising speed once the country has achieved a sufficient standard of living for its entire population, which will still take time.

This prospect condemns us to remaining prisoners of a capitalist system for a long time to come, as China itself is set to become its main leader.

It is in the process of expanding in Africa where there is much to exploit, where, among other things, it is setting up its economic colonisation. This will do little to raise living standards in Africa.

As for India, the outlook is undoubtedly a little different, because this is a country that is banking on 'innovative technologies', without setting out too much to conquer the world for the moment.

And then there's Russia, which is far from having said its last word, a despotic country which is going to recover economically, even if its economy is sometimes mafia-like, and which is going to negotiate its markets with the rising powers, particularly China.

Faced with all these facts that no one can hide any longer, what do we represent today, we Westerners who used to make the world rain and shine? We are left with our fine words, our more or less democratic laws, our secularism, and our barely flourishing economies in the face of emerging countries that are changing the face of the world.

In all of this, we would like to put forward an ethical and moral message inspired by universal values in relation to the other world, that of the disembodied spirits, some of whom are closer to the universal to let us know about the difficult situation created by human egoism and pride. So, we have to be their spokespeople, the representatives on Earth of an idea that transcends the miserable human conditions created by powers beyond our understanding.

Unlike others, we won't be giving miracle recipes that don't exist, but proposals for how to move forward differently along the paths of freedom, equality and fraternity. None of this depends on a single school of thought, because the diversity of economic situations and cultures must be taken into account. None of this depends on a single school of thought, because the diversity of economic situations and cultures must be taken into account. All of this depends on an awareness that must emerge, not just in one region or one country, but gradually throughout the world, and no one has the power to impose this awareness, which can only come about gradually through struggles here and there.

BUILDING A SOCIAL EUROPE

From France, since that's where we're talking about formulating a spiritist project, we have to develop concepts that apply not only to us but to the world.

Initially, we can imagine a new deal for our country and for Europe, provided we continue to envisage European continuity. The far left has told us that we could do without it, which would be a suicidal utopia. Even Greece preferred not to attempt the Grexit adventure in 2015.

What's more, the world needs Europe:

- Diplomatically, to influence global balances.
 - Democratic, ethical and moral values are best represented in Europe, despite many shortcomings, particularly in the East.
 - It is also from Europe that we could envisage total decolonisation, i.e., cooperation with Africa based on fair trade in all products, whether minerals or food, as well as aid to create the missing infrastructures.
 - Europe also has a role to play where there are hotbeds of war, as in the Middle East, and a diplomatic role to play in bringing pressure to bear on the United States and Russia in times of crisis, which France has tried to do in recent years.
- But Europe is not just France and Germany. We need to involve other countries in this global diplomacy, which might require a review of its constitution, its committee and its various responsibilities, which seem very diluted.
- On this point, we need a clearer, more transparent Europe, so that every citizen in every country is better informed about what is going on.

REFLECTIONS ON PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

This type of democracy is a political system based on strengthening the participation of the people in political decision-making, created following the crisis of representative democracy and the disinterest of citizens in exercising their power.

Democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people. Modern democracies, which represented progress compared with authoritarian regimes where citizens were not equal before the law (women or the Third Estate), are now being called into question. In law, every citizen can participate in the life of the political community, but in practice, decisions are contested and decision-makers and representatives of the people are disowned. The concept of participatory democracy, or democracy with the people, is increasingly being mooted as a way of sharing the exercise of power by involving citizens in decision-making. Introduced in the field of town and county planning, it has mainly been implemented at a local level, confined to a municipality or an inter-municipal grouping (with great success). It is now being extended to the environmental field, with associations playing a leading role.

Thanks to these citizens' competitions, the authorities have been made aware of little-known realities and citizens have been able to voice their disagreement. However, the majority of citizens are not directly involved, the relays being carried out by advisory committees and associations, but there is not enough meaningful interaction. It often has a symbolic aspect, but more and more citizens are demanding the right to have their grievances and proposals heard directly.

At the same time, a considerable number of citizens are losing interest in politics. Turnout at national and local elections is falling steadily year on year, and debate and activism are a minority affair. However, it seems that more and more citizens want to make their voices heard, in particular to express their difficulties, such as the Yellow Vests crisis in France, a heterogeneous movement that reflects the malaise of the people at different levels. People who are completely disconnected from the system and suffering its disastrous effects are now interested in politics and intend to influence decisions.

The problems

First of all, there is the **problem of civic capacity**: understanding the workings of public organisation, being able to pass judgement and make comments, presupposes learning and training. If we are to avoid making hasty or even biased

choices, we need a real education, an education that includes the basic rudiments of schooling to develop the capacity for analysis and critical thinking. But there is more to it than just the basics: we need education in citizenship, by encouraging people to acquire the information they need to develop a critical mind. Parents and educators are essential cogwheels in this awakening, but we are in the age of every man for himself, and egoism has been erected into a system by well-orchestrated advertising, initiated by major groups that have only one objective: to sell more and more and create new needs.

From an early age, citizens are encouraged to seek their personal well-being, leading to a damaging individualistic passivity, which could be overcome because there are so many opportunities and means to cultivate oneself. Citizens' feelings have always been aroused in times of trouble or great difficulty, often periods of famine when inequalities were more keenly felt, such as the privileges of 1789, the financial crises, the epidemics of 1848 and submission to the occupying forces in 1871.

On the other hand, in times of peace when problems are less prevalent, well-being and serenity numb our consciences and encourage us to withdraw into ourselves. Social networks are a case in point, because they are all about the self, the personal vision, without taking into account the community and others. We need to learn to step outside our individual condition and the habits of our immediate environment.

There is an important element to consider: the Earth is a sphere of slow evolution and the majority of its inhabitants are likely to sink into a form of indifference to others. To mitigate this risk, we need to go beyond civic education to raise awareness of others and of the living conditions of the most disadvantaged, to awaken the spirituality that distracts us from the materialist whirlwind. Experiments such as those carried out in Kingersheim show that few citizens respond to invitations (when lots are drawn for participatory councils, most do not respond).

People are often ready to challenge but find it difficult to build or propose.

Building means making an ongoing effort, not just taking an interest in public affairs at election time.

The people's crisis of confidence in their elected representatives

Many people are suspicious of, or even downright hostile towards, elected representatives, who are often perceived as political hacks looking to hold office as an opportunity to profit from the system and serve the interests of the powerful. Admittedly, some elected representatives have lacked probity or seriously broken the law. Numerous scandals have marred French political life, such as the Panama Canal scandal under the Third Republic, a corruption affair that ruined thousands of savers. There was also the Stavisky affair, with its scandal of trafficking in decorations, and more recently the *Urba* and “*Carrefour du développement*” affairs. It is therefore essential to establish a framework to prevent such behaviour.

Numerous national and European initiatives have been taken since 2010 to clean up public life:

- The ethics commissions for elected representatives, set up at national and local level, aim to avoid conflicts of interest and ensure that holding a public office does not lead to personal enrichment. Charters for local elected representatives, created by the law of 31 March 2015, have been introduced in major cities.

- The “*Haute Autorité pour la Transparence de la Vie Publique*” (HATVP - *High Authority for Transparency in Public Life*) was created in 2013, with the aim of making public life more ethical and protecting elected representatives in the exercise of their mandate. In particular, they must provide a declaration of interests and a declaration

of assets. They must inform the HATVP (whose prerogatives have been strengthened and whose resources have been increased tenfold) of their profession, any memberships in associations, their assets and any interests they may have in certain groups.

- Creation of the Central Corruption Prevention Service (SCPC), made up of "wise men" from outside elected office and the civil service, responsible for ruling on any conflicts of interest.

In addition, public funding of political parties limits private funding and, by the same token, the risks of corruption and public interest in major industrial groups. It is a system that allocates resources on the basis of the representativeness of the various parties, while requiring accountability for the expenditure incurred during election campaigns.

These measures certainly deserve to be fleshed out, but they have enabled a number of elected representatives to be punished. The aim of these measures is also to protect elected representatives, because the regulations are complex, the channels are numerous and it is possible to break the rules without dishonest intent. Politicians are not basically more dishonest or fragile, they are like all the inhabitants of the Earth in a relative inferiority and we have political representatives in our image. The conditions under which they hold office take them far from the realities on the ground, and because of their position, they are approached by all sorts of individuals and groups. It sometimes takes tenacity not to be corrupted or to keep campaign promises.

The reforms or decisions to be taken can be unpopular, at least for certain groups. Frankness on this subject is rarely valued by the public, and some of the benefits have to be seen in the long term, whereas we live in the here and now. Politicians are often more inclined to satisfy the elites. Politicians must not go along with and amplify the trends of the times or the pressures of the moment by remaining in the political "in-between"; on the contrary, they must correct or reverse things.

Party problems

Political parties are preoccupied with gaining or retaining power. Members of parliament, who are members of certain parties, do not have the requisite knowledge and experience; their role is to endorse decisions taken in high places. Many elected representatives come from the commercial sector and are therefore not representative of the population. This can lead citizens to doubt the effectiveness of parliamentarians and to resort to selfish solutions on the fringes of official procedures.

The media problem

The media are seen as the fourth estate, relaying decisions taken or planned. The race for ratings is detrimental, with the media more interested in scoops and one-liners than in impartial analysis, and more interested in diversion than information. People in the public eye are invited on, while others are not. It's not healthy for the state to control information, but neither is it healthy for money to do it for the state. What's more, serious and important events are sometimes quickly overshadowed by other, sometimes lighter, news that distracts from the real issues. Raphaël Glucksmann gave the example in his book of the appeal on 13/11/2017 by 15,000 scientists from 184 countries who sounded the alarm about the climate.

The problem of technocracy

Because of the complexity of the regulations and the lack of training for elected representatives, the dossiers are entrusted to experts. Everything has become more complex and is now the domain of specialists. As a result, it is difficult to know whether decisions are taken with full knowledge of the facts, whether delicate trade-offs are properly understood and whether the political will is respected, particularly at European level, where technocracy is more prevalent. Elected representatives are more inclined to take an interest in issues that receive media coverage and are popular, and to lose interest in more technical issues that can nevertheless have major consequences. In this respect, we should consider the reports from the Court of Auditors, which, year after year, highlight the mistakes and bad decisions made hastily, sometimes to satisfy lobbies, with disastrous financial consequences. There is then a risk of demagogic and populist excesses.

The power of lobbyists

Politicians are subject to the influence of big business and large institutional or associative organisations, particularly in the economic sphere where elected representatives are dependent on the decisions of large private groups. The influence of lobbyists is felt in public debate, in particular because of their considerable financial resources, in a collusion of power with the money-holders of the major press groups.

What can we expect?

The political system itself is limited in scope, lacking the participation, understanding and sense of belonging of all. In some Amerindian regions, there is no state structure, but all citizens participate, because they all feel they belong to the same society, sharing the same values of solidarity and justice.

Challenging the presidential system

The semi-presidential system was tailor-made for General de Gaulle in the constitution of the Fifth Republic, but it has shown its limits with the last presidents, with too much verticality and a lack of pluralism. From this point of view, the balance of power should be reconsidered and either a constitutional revision or the drafting of a new constitution, i.e. a Sixth Republic, should be envisaged.

Thus, the bicameral system (National Assembly and Senate) in parliament, if it remains, could be amended. Some are proposing a Senate with members drawn by lot to balance a parliament with elected representatives in the National Assembly and citizens in the Senate.

The number of terms of office of elected representatives should be reduced, which would prevent some of them from taking decisions based on electoral issues, particularly if, for example, the office was limited to a single term. Their status should be reviewed along the lines of the Nordic countries, for example, and their operating resources (transport, assistants' allowances, etc.). We would also need to review the composition of the ethics commission to counter lobbies (electric fishing, nuclear or oil lobbies) and also review the problem of "pantouflage" *.

* *Colloquially refers to the fact that a senior civil servant goes to work in a private company*

The problem of the centralising or Jacobin system

This system avoids cronyism and local partisan decisions, but it distances decision-makers from the practical realities on the ground. This can lead to a lack of discernment when it comes to the measures to be applied.

On the other hand, the Girondin pact, which consists of giving more powers to local authorities, would be desirable, but in practice sovereignty is undermined by a lack of resources. A recent example is the abolition of the “taxe d'habitation”, compensated by the State, which deprives local authorities of their financial sovereignty.

One example of success at local level that we have already mentioned in the section on economic issues is the city of Hamburg, which has re-municipalised all its electricity, gas and heating distribution networks, previously entrusted to the private sector, by adopting renewable energies and ensuring financial equilibrium.

What kind of civic action should be considered?

Referendums are a possible option, but should be limited because they require maturity, knowledge and culture on the part of citizens.

It is impossible to involve all citizens in all decisions and at all stages because of the complexity of the processes. The trade-offs are delicate and there are risks of conflicts of interest.

A popular initiative referendum is also envisaged, but with the risk of an overload of requests that would be difficult to manage and could lead to paralysis of decision-making or deadlock.

The Brexit, adopted on 23 June 2016, came as a real surprise, and this great power exit from the European Union is proving very difficult to achieve.

Theresa May, who was in charge of the arrangements for its implementation, was unable to propose an exit agreement and was forced to resign in June 2019. The consequences of Brexit are numerous and difficult to predict precisely. They will have a significant financial impact because of the commitments made that must be honoured. Some people have called for a new referendum, believing that the consequences of this decision have not been fully thought through. One might well question the relevance of this referendum, which was seen as a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister of the time, David Cameron, rather than a real desire to leave Europe.

The example of the Swiss referendum of 30 November 2009 on banning the construction of new minarets came as a huge surprise. A united front of government members, political parties and representatives of all the religious communities opposed the measure and campaigned for it, with opinion polls predicting that it would be rejected by the Swiss people. But a campaign skilfully orchestrated by the populist right, described by some as disgusting, based on fear and the threat of a religion that would invade everything (some posters showed a woman in a burqa in front of a Swiss flag covered with minarets reminiscent of missiles), overcame the common sense of a country where 40% of the population is foreign. The decision, adopted by 57.50%, was a vote of mistrust and protest rather than hatred, but it did generate a feeling of shame about a provision that has now been incorporated into the constitution.

The referendum on mass immigration adopted on 9 February 2014 also illustrates the risks of putting decisions on sensitive issues to the vote. This text provides for quotas of foreigners according to the needs of the economy, while respecting the principle of national preference. Here again, the populist right has brandished the threat of Switzerland crumbling under immigration, jeopardising its infrastructure and its social model. This decision is all the more remarkable given that, for economic and demographic reasons, Switzerland needs foreign workers and welcomes a large workforce, most of whom come from neighbouring European Union countries (France, Germany, Italy and Portugal). So, we accept the workforce, but not the

people.

Another idea is that of revoking elective mandates by referendum, with the risk of leading to populist and demagogic excesses, especially in a society of immediacy where everything moves quickly, and where facts and statements are sometimes distorted by the media in information that is too hasty or partisan. The scope of this recall referendum should therefore be limited.

Referendums should be the result of in-depth, exhaustive questioning and dialogue between all citizens, not just a hasty yes or no answer. Generally speaking, we need to learn to make decisions less quickly but better. The time has come to communicate differently. We need to move away from raw, distorted opinion towards a lucid, stable and rational vision.

Reflections can be conducted in small groups to develop a deliberative culture based on knowledge and reflection.

There's the Quebec experience, which offers a trans-disciplinary approach - sociological, psychological and social - that allows us to get away from preconceived ideas and clichés.

What's missing is a deeper level of communication to create a sharing between citizens, thanks to neutral professionals, independent of any social hierarchy, thus avoiding tribunes monopolising the floor, in order to bring about consensus.

It takes time to draw up and implement projects, and in the current context this is a difficulty, because both elected representatives and the public want quick, concrete, visible results by the electoral deadline. Elected representatives are subject to pressure from the population, which would be avoided if there were a single term of office.

Some are proposing a universal income guaranteeing a means of subsistence for all, with the corollary of civic obligations.

In the same way, the reduction of workload through the progression of robotisation would free up time that everyone could use to participate in civic life, particularly the poorer classes who are far removed from the system.

The RIP (*Référendum d'Initiative Partagée* or *Shared Initiative Referendum*) or referendum law, is a referendum proposed by at least one fifth of the members of parliament to citizens who are regularly registered on the electoral roll. The Constitutional Council verifies the legality of the proposed measure and sets the number of voters who must approve the referendum. A recent example is the way Paris airports are run.

The RIC (*Référendum d'Initiative Citoyenne* or *People's Initiative Referendum*) is a direct form of democratic expression that gives citizens the opportunity to express themselves and decide directly without going through the Assembly or the President of the Republic. There are four possible scenarios: to propose a law, to repeal a law, to dismiss an elected representative or to amend the constitution.

While the aim is noble, care must be taken in its implementation, as too frequent referendums have a demobilising effect. This also presupposes that the objectives of the referendum are clearly set out without bias and that they are fully understood by the citizens being asked to vote. Here again, there is a need for education in citizenship and an awareness of public affairs and how they work.

THE ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS

The guilds of the Middle Ages, which brought together bosses and workers, gave way in the 16th^e century, and especially after the revolution of 1789, to purely workers' associations, the "Compagnonnage" brotherhoods, which set out to defend workers against the increasing control of the masters over the corporate system; however, this system was limited to crafts and remained confined to small communities. Trade unionism, on the other hand, was a product of the industrial revolution and was a counterweight to an economic system that stripped workers of ownership of the instruments of production, combined with a bourgeois and individualistic conception of society that left the worker prey to the arbitrariness of the employer. It was in England, the starting point of the industrial revolution, that workers themselves developed an awareness of work, and trade unionism developed with the first *trade unions*.

In France at the end of the XIXth century and the beginning of the XXth century, at the time of the industrial boom, we witnessed the misery of the working class, exploited by back-breaking work for hours on end, in difficult and precarious conditions where illness, unemployment and work-related accidents, which were common at the time, left the worker and his family in total destitution because they had no social cover. There were no regulations on working conditions, apprenticeships or pay. The political class was generally hostile to trade union action, and in 1791 the Le Chapelier law was passed, banning the right of trades to form coalitions and strikes. Similarly, workers' revolts were severely repressed, such as that of the Canuts in Lyon in 1833, or those of the miners in the Nord region and at Le Creusot in 1870.

The offence of strike action was abolished in 1864 and later, in 1884, the Waldeck Rousseau law, passed under pressure from 500 trade unions, recognised the legality of professional associations. From then on, trade unionism expanded rapidly, even if it took employers a long time to recognise trade unions as valid negotiating partners. The large number of trade unions - over 5,000 in 1913 - gradually came together in national professional unions, then inter-professional unions at departmental and regional level, and finally central unions such as the CGT, which was founded in 1895.

The distinctive feature of French trade unionism after the First World War was that it was politicised, not content with defending the interests of workers but proposing to change society, in which the relationship between employers and employees would be turned upside down. In 1935 and 1936, the CGT and CGTU played an important role in drawing up the Front Populaire programme. This politicisation explains the relatively low level of trade unionism compared with other countries.

There are currently eight main trade union organisations in France, but the most representative are the CGT (Confédération Générale des Travailleurs), the CFDT (Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail), FO (Force Ouvrière), the CFE-CGC (Confédération Française de Encadrement - Confédération Générale des Cadres) and the CFTC (Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens). These five confederations have a long history and for over forty years have been recognised as representative at national and cross-industry level, with different weightings depending on the number of members. The other three unions, UNSA (Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes), FSU (Fédération Syndicale Unitaire) and Union syndicale solidaire, are more recent and do not yet enjoy officially recognised status. Trade unions defend the interests of workers in all sectors of activity. But there are also unions that represent particular categories. For example, employers are represented by MEDEF, executives by CFE-CGC, students in France by UNEF,

journalists by SNJ, and the medical sector by the Confederation of French Medical Unions (CSFM).

Trade unions are financed by membership fees, but also by certain taxes such as the employers' contribution to the financing of trade union organisations. In return, the law requires trade unions to publish their accounts.

Today, trade unions listen to employees' grievances, defend their rights and ensure compliance with labour regulations on working conditions, pay and social protection. The unions are consulted by the government on social reforms, particularly when the Labour Code is amended. Similarly, for a collective agreement to be validated, it must be signed by one or more unions representing 30% of the votes and not be rejected by unions representing 50% of the votes.

Unions are sometimes criticised for strikes that are disruptive or even paralysing, and they are sometimes represented by hotheaded individuals who are hardly representative of the union ideal. However, their role remains essential in raising collective demands and attracting the media to battles that pit powerless workers against unbridled capitalism. Without trade unions, many reforms would never have seen the light of day.

We can sometimes criticise the corporatism of certain battles, a sign of the egotistical withdrawal characteristic of today's society. It is true that by defending the worker, the human being, trade unions should be more universal. Attempts to found an international group of trade unions date back to the 19th century under the aegis of Karl Marx. An international labour secretariat was set up in 1901 and the international trade union federation in 1913. Today, the ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation), founded in 2006, is the organisation with the largest number of trade unions members: 331 organisations in 163 countries, with 207 million members. In France, the CGT, CFDT, FO and CFTC are all members of the ITUC.

The ITUC provides support to member organisations facing repression and the denial of trade union freedoms. It supports "general" campaigns on issues that revolutionaries may share - climate justice, the elimination of slavery - but it does not organise direct actions such as strikes or demonstrations.

However, it is likely that the growth of multinational companies and the emergence of universal issues, such as pollution and climate change, will lead the various national trade unions to look for ways of working more closely together.

Trade unions must remain a bulwark against the power of domineering finance, and vigilance must be permanent and structured. The poverty and oppression fought by the various trade unions still exist. The poorest are also the poorest when it comes to defending their interests, and they need to be supported and protected in healthy but rigorous and uncompromising struggles within a universal vision of the human condition at work. It is a source of suffering, bullying, anxiety, degradation and sometimes even suicide. Unemployment, by making it precarious, has weakened part of the population, and today in France some workers have a situation that has nothing to envy of the workers at the beginning of the industrial era. Here is the posthumous testimony of a trade union leader:

"Trade unionism is not dead. They would have you believe it, but trade unionism is not dead. Sincere men and women are fighting for their brothers and sisters. Anti-union propaganda is on the increase. The fight for equality takes many different forms, and trade unionism is one of them. They would have you believe that there is no point in belonging to this or that union. Trade unions are a way for people to free themselves from the yoke of capitalism and paternalism. They would have you believe that only workers can be union members and that once you earn a certain

income, there is a contradiction between earning money and being a union member. That's just not true. Money does not annihilate conscience and reflection. Why always cut back? Why always cut back? Fight, yes, for ever more sharing. Society has reached the point where different populations, at a professional level, are fighting each other in the sense that it's becoming almost disrespectful to fight for your ideas. I remain a fighter, it's in my soul. I look at your society and the world around it and I no longer recognise the values that were once mine. It's all deliberate, planned and constructed. It's up to man to reflect, to wake up and raise his arm, not just in words but in actions. By that I mean physically showing your disapproval. As you know, change will come from the masses. Long live trade unionism! It's one of the ways in which mankind can free itself from the shackles of the past that are still all too present."

CITIZEN THINK GROUPS

Many people deplore the fact that political decision-makers are often far removed from the realities of their fellow citizens' lives, even though it is possible to meet elected representatives in their constituency through local offices. In a perfect democracy, every citizen should be able to express his or her wishes, grievances and plans. But these are vast, inevitably very different from one another and therefore impossible to assess and harmonise, especially as on a planet of low evolution as Earth, demands are often selfish and the general interest is rarely understood. You can't please everyone, and the authority in charge of decisions must be able to assess the merits of the measures envisaged, for the well-being of all. So, while it is hardly desirable to organise major public debates where solutions rarely emerge, but rather where resentment is expressed, setting up citizens' focus groups can help us to better understand the reality of things and to propose the most appropriate measures.

This type of consultation exists at local level, when local authorities consult their constituents before proceeding with a particular development. Citizens' debates have been set up in a number of cities, including Lyon since 2016, where conferences and debates are held to encourage residents to think about the issues and take an active part. This could be in the area of transport, for example.

What can be done directly for local decisions is more difficult, if not impossible, to implement when it comes to issues that concern the country as a whole, and even more so across borders, when it comes to issues that concern all the inhabitants of a region of the world, Europe for example.

The directorates-general of ministries often call-in external consultants to investigate a very specific subject. This was the case for the *Directorate-General for Public Health*, which wanted to look in greater depth at the issue of user-citizen participation in the healthcare system. To this end, it commissioned *Planète Publique* to carry out a study of the various methods of participation, based on around fifty interviews and a literature review. This work resulted in the production of two reports: a strategic report and a complementary, more operational report in the form of twelve thematic fact sheets.

Other methods exist, such as:

- Focus groups:

A focus group brings together a small group of people with similar characteristics to gather information on a specific subject. It is a qualitative survey method, as opposed to quantitative surveys based on a questionnaire. This technique can be used to assess needs, expectations and satisfaction, or to gain a better understanding of

opinions, motivations or behaviour. It can also be used to test or bring to light new ideas that are unexpected to the researcher.

- **Citizens' panels:** this process has already been used to debate complex issues such as the environment, sustainable development and bioethics.

In practice, a group of citizens is drawn by lot to give their opinion on an issue of public interest. This opinion is supposed to be taken into account during parliamentary debates and decision-making processes on the issue. To be able to give a reasoned and considered opinion, the group of citizens, who are experts in the field, obtain as much information as possible and learn about the subject from competent people.

- **Citizens' workshops:** this is a method of collective deliberation that enables a group of randomly selected citizens who are not specialists in a subject to express their views on a public issue that is the subject of debate. In citizens' workshops, the group of citizens expresses its views directly to the project owner by submitting a written opinion. This procedure ensures that the citizens are fully involved in the process of expression.

- **Citizens' conferences** are organised on different themes, with the aim of involving citizens in the public debate by providing them with all the information and data on a specific subject in order to gather their opinions, comments and objections.

These forms of participatory democracy are on the increase. Despite their limitations, these meetings, apart from those involving citizens selected by lot, are attended by people who are already naturally interested in politics or who are personally concerned by the subject. They deserve to be encouraged because they bring citizens closer to decision-makers by giving them a say in the choices made.

However, it will always be necessary to ensure that the debates are neutral and that the people consulted fully understand, so that they make informed decisions and do not make decisions without thinking or daring to assert themselves. Procedures are becoming increasingly complex, and it is difficult for public decision-makers to stand up to technocracy.

Awareness of public affairs is still very low, with people still thinking that it doesn't concern them or only reacting when they are personally affected. It must start at school, because it's at the very beginning of life that we form citizens and learn to live together in harmony and sharing, and not in a narcissistic approach to life, which is still all too real.

THE ASSOCIATIONS

Voluntary organisations play a key role. They are very numerous in France and operate in a wide variety of sectors. From modest neighbourhood associations to national charities, there are huge differences in terms of resources and impact on political life. Some make up for the shortcomings of the official authorities (aid for the homeless, the poorest, refugees). Others, such as consumer protection associations, use their action and vigilance to ensure that standards are respected, to denounce abuses and the manoeuvres of major industrial groups, and to exert pressure to change regulations on specific points. For those recognised as being of public utility or interest, the fact that a large proportion of the sums paid are tax-exempt is a definite advantage, giving them more resources.

There are other ways of putting forward ideas and expressing disapproval, and **petitions**, which are becoming increasingly numerous, have a real impact when they highlight real problems or denounce decisions that are detrimental to consumers,

users or local residents. When they are signed by a large number of petitioners, they represent a threat to the public authorities, who may be forced to amend or even reverse their decisions. Many websites provide serious information and encourage people to sign petitions to defend the rights of a person or group of people (political refugees or prisoners, climate refugees) or to defend causes such as animal rights. Signed in large numbers and combined with other actions (demonstrations, marches), they have an undeniable impact because they force public authorities or private leaders to study and correct malfunctions and injustices.

THE BOYCOTT

We live in a society where money plays a central role, where the possession of material goods is still, for many, the ultimate goal. All this is skilfully orchestrated by pervasive advertising, whose sole aim is to drive consumption, in order to enrich certain large groups, many of whom have little concern for the well-being of their customers. In our capacity as consumers and therefore as providers of funds, we have a force that can be put to use quite simply. Firstly, by educating young people in particular, by making them understand that happiness does not lie in the possession of goods, in a frantic race to buy ever more sophisticated products that only bring ephemeral satisfaction.

We can boycott certain products because they are dangerous, because they have a harmful impact on the environment, or because of the attitude of large industrial groups that support untenable causes, that practise tax evasion or that are challenged in their management of personnel. Although these boycotts do not always have an impact in the very short term, they are one of the most effective means of doing so, as they directly affect the profitability and therefore the key objective of the companies in question. That's why, by raising awareness of them and encouraging them, we can demonstrate our strength and determination as citizens of the world. It is a non-violent weapon whose effects were convincing in the case of the Montgomery bus boycott in Alabama, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man, and in South Africa to put an end to the apartheid policy. Today, there are high-profile boycotts of major companies such as Danone, Nestlé, Mac Do and Monsanto, but they can also be carried out effectively on a smaller scale.

Chapter 9

THE PLURALITY OF WORLDS

"There are many mansions in the Father's house" (John 14:2)

Let's now extend our argument to a universal reality that goes beyond the borders of our planet, to put our situation into perspective and integrate it into the vast world of galactic Universes.

In *The Book of Spirits*, Allan Kardec sets out the main principles of Spiritism as taught by those beyond, including the existence of God, the first cause of all things, the intellectual and moral evolution of the spirit through reincarnation and the plurality of inhabited worlds at different stages of development.

During this initial period of spiritism, Camille Flammarion discovered *Le Livre des Esprits* in 1861, then met Allan Kardec and took part in a number of table sessions, notably with the publisher Didier, Théophile Gautier and Victorien Sardou. That same year, 1861, he wrote his work "*La pluralité des mondes habités*" (*The plurality of inhabited worlds*), which was published in 1862. As an astronomer, Flammarion had his own conception of an immeasurable Universe that he could not imagine being devoid of all forms of life. At a time when knowledge of astronomy was still limited, he already envisaged extra-terrestrial life.

If there is one decisive idea in Flammarion's thesis, it is his premature assumption that distant stars are suns around which planets gravitate. In celestial mechanics, he therefore imagines a multitude of gravitational systems that are more or less similar to our own solar system. While this idea was logical in terms of what was imaginable, it was nonetheless highly innovative and ahead of future discoveries. Until recently, most astronomers did not consider the possibility of gravitational systems around stars, and it was not known whether some of them had properties identical to those of our Sun. It was not until 1995, following the discovery of the first exoplanet *51 Pegasus*, that the existence of other planetary systems in the Universe was considered. Camille Flammarion's intuition was finally confirmed, and since then new exoplanets have been discovered on a regular basis, numbering 4126 as of 1st November 2019. Now that the idea has been confirmed, we can imagine that there are hundreds of billions of planets, some of which could quite naturally be inhabited, which would confirm Camille Flammarion's second assertion, referring to "the plurality of inhabited worlds". It is in this way that the spiritist affirmation finds its full dimension, when astronomy, a century and a half later, leads us more and more towards this probability. What was unthinkable at one time has become probable today, but for the spiritist this is only the confirmation of a certainty acquired long ago.

In this field, as in others, Spiritism has proved to be a precursor of new ideas that science will later have to verify: for example, the study of NDEs (*Near Death Experience*) more or less brings us back to what we already knew, and studies of children who remember their previous lives confirm the principle of reincarnation, as do certain regressions under hypnosis.

With regard to exoplanets that we imagine might be habitable, astronomical science is once again reductive, formulating this hypothesis, but with the following restriction: we observe planets that have some similarities with the Earth, assuming that life could only have hatched under certain conditions. We don't want to consider that

there could be forms of life on worlds that are totally dissimilar from each other, and why not possible life in other conditions in terms of structures, temperatures and atmospheres.

THE GREAT SPIRITIST PRINCIPLES

Every Spirit is born of the divine, pulsed by the causal force and therefore created in a given time, created 'simple and ignorant' according to Allan Kardec's formula. And it is through a natural instinct to melt into materiality that it becomes incarnate in a world that we will describe as primitive, a world in which the Spirit will gradually discover both its own existence and that of its fellow creatures. There are thus planets in the Universe that are inferior to the Earth and that correspond to the evolutionary needs of the most primitive beings who apprehend their own identity in a community that is still hostile.

After a few lives on these worlds, there is a rapid transition to more elaborate worlds such as Earth, where the lower instincts are still very much present. The Spirit completes a cycle of lives there, and when the need arises, while living in the afterlife, he is then called to reincarnate on a more evolved world than the Earth where he can complete another cycle of lives, then envisage an even higher world, and so on until he reaches a state of perfection leading to the end of reincarnations; this is the state of pure Spirit who will participate in the divine and infinite creation.

According to this spiritist principle, there are inhabitable and inhabited planets throughout the Universe, planets that are at different stages of evolution. And these planets themselves are undergoing an evolutionary process in their very structure, as well as through the overall evolution of their inhabitants. And based on this principle, the Earth, like other worlds, will be called upon to undergo a global evolution that could lead to the stage of a superior planet. This process can only be envisaged over very long periods of time, and on the condition that the planet in question does not drift towards its own destruction.

THE UFO PHENOMENON

If there is any further proof of the plurality of worlds, it is the various extra-terrestrial manifestations that have been recorded at every period in human history. For more than seventy years, numerous testimonies have been recorded and all the serious studies carried out have led to the conviction that there are intelligent forces circulating near the Earth, or even landing there and establishing contacts. In the most accurate accounts, humanoids of various shapes and sizes have been observed, leaving no doubt that extra-terrestrial beings are visiting us.

And that's when ufologists start asking themselves a host of questions: how is interstellar travel possible? Are these beings of the same nature as us? Are they trying to colonise us? Are they better than us or do they sometimes have dubious intentions? What is the purpose of their visits? And so on.

As far as modes of travel are concerned, a simple reasoning based on human logic would lead us to say that this is incomprehensible. When we know that the nearest star to our solar system* is four light years away, and that others in the galaxy will be tens, hundreds or even thousands of light years away**, how can we imagine possible travel? Assuming that we could find the technical means to travel at the speed of light, which is highly improbable as far as humans are concerned, but let's suppose... also knowing, it is said, that this speed would be the ultimate possibility because it is unsurpassable (nothing could go faster than light), we would then need a hundred years to reach a planet located a hundred light years away, which is not

an extraordinary distance on the scale of our galaxy. So, considering the data that correspond to the limits of our reasoning... impossible!

Some ufologists imagine that there are other space-time dimensions capable of creating doors, trapdoors, shortcuts of sorts, enabling us to cross immeasurable distances by transiting through other dimensions. This is a very interesting thesis, and we will supplement it with a spiritist fact: other worlds more evolved than our own possess technologies that surpass us, that apply to more ethereal conditions of materiality, and an essential element, the force of thought is used to overcome the constraints of matter and space. Through the power of thought, propulsion is transcended, enabling all forms of limitation to be overcome. We can get some idea of this on Earth, through certain phenomena such as levitation, the teleportation of an object that can instantly lose its materiality to find itself in another place once again materialised.

In the case of a disembodied spirit, for example, it no longer moves at a certain speed, it is in another dimension, and if it is closer to our material vibrations, it can move instantaneously from one end of the Earth to the other, or even to another world, in the simple process of its desire transporting it where it wishes.

In the same way, for incarnated spirits who live in more ethereal structures of matter than our own, the force of thought can be a driving force, a dynamo-psychism that will annihilate material constraints, to the point of propelling a device at dizzying speeds, or even transporting it almost instantaneously from one place to another. This is in fact a large part of the secret of interstellar travel...

*This is Proxima Centauri, one of the three stars that make up the Alpha Centauri system, located at a distance of around 4.22 light-years from the Solar System.

**Our galaxy, the Milky Way, is about 100,000 light years across. It contains several hundred billion stars.

WORLDS SOLIDARITY

The more the Spirit evolves, the more it learns the meaning of love and therefore of solidarity. In the same way, the more a planet evolves, the more it develops in the direction of this love that takes it beyond its own borders. And this is how the higher worlds naturally exchange with each other, whether through interstellar travel or telepathy. And in this solidarity, the superior worlds have the natural need and desire to help other worlds of inferior evolution as ours. This is what has always happened on Earth, confirmed by the many traces studied by archaeologists who are still amazed at the enigmatic constructions that we could not even reproduce with our modern techniques.

So, there is this law of universal solidarity to which the history of the Earth bears witness. But for a long time now, those who were often considered to be gods from the sky have been the object of rejection, engendering fear and even retaliation when it comes to the air forces who, in charge of monitoring the skies, pursue anything that moves, anything that is suspicious and could possibly be an enemy human aircraft. And when we realise that it's not human, we chase it down, just in case we're dealing with an enemy from space...

In other words, visitors from outer space are not welcome. Especially since, according to some ufologists, their manifestations are much more frequent in sensitive areas, i.e. where secret military bases, nuclear weapons bases, etc. are located. So, surveillance? Why not, after all, but it would only be based on noble intentions, given that all the dangers are often quite obvious. Let's think back to what the Americans called their "Star Wars" programme, to all those nuclear warheads that have multiplied out of all proportion and are turned towards the potential enemy,

based on the principle of deterrence and the balance of power, without thinking that in the event of human error or an accident, the perils would be considerable. So yes, why not assume surveillance by extra-terrestrials who are worried about the fate of humanity?

FROM WORLD TO WORLD

Extending the principles of spiritism, we know that in evolution, humans who have completed their earthly cycle reincarnate on higher worlds. There may be one or more of these worlds where many humans have been reincarnated. On a more ethereal planet, they have a relatively conscious memory of their anteriorities, so they can consciously retain certain concerns about the Earth, and in the solidarity of worlds, watch over their former planet in their own way, and why not manifest themselves to human beings they may have known in other lives.

This is where reincarnation and the plurality of worlds come together. This plurality becomes more logical when we realise that extra-terrestrials are not necessarily aliens, but friendly spirits, incarnated elsewhere and who remember. Neither strangers nor enemies, beings from elsewhere are other ourselves, other incarnated spirits of the same nature as us, with the only difference that their evolution has led them a little further along the evolutionary path that leads to God.

We are all children of the Universe, we are all extra-terrestrials, if only because we lived on inferior worlds before incarnating on Earth. And we will become extra-terrestrials again when we are called upon to complete our evolution on higher worlds.

EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL MODELS

As indicated in the previous chapter, the law of progress brought to light by Spiritism teaches us that all spirits were created simple and ignorant, and that the divine law of nature is that of intellectual and moral evolution, an evolution which will go through many incarnated experiences in matter in order to progressively advance, over a very long time, towards a perfection by which the spirit will join God. This perfection, which is very distant as far as we are concerned, is not an end, nor a fusion into the great whole, but an eternal continuity in which the pure spirit retains its individuality and, in some way, participates in God, a concept that we cannot define further since it is not within our capacity to define what perfection is in integral intelligence and total love.

This journey of successive existences takes place on different worlds, from the most primitive to the most evolved, worlds adapted to the intellectual and moral level of the spirits that inhabit them. For the spirit to evolve, at our stage for example, it has to return to Earth several times; this is how many of us humans have been able to live an earthly cycle of several lives over the last few centuries, or even millennia.

At the very beginning of evolution, these are very inferior spheres with no real consciousness; life there is vegetative, instinctive, brutal and with no real learning other than that of recognising oneself in an identity that gradually asserts itself in the eyes of others with mutual distrust. Later, as one life follows another, a certain awareness is awakened and a feeling develops; it is the heart and reason that gradually emerge, in recognition of the other incarnated spirits, who also come from the same God, and whom we will have to learn to consider, respect and then love.

Without being very advanced, the Earth is nonetheless on a higher level than these first planets, the most primitive on the evolutionary scale. But it is a sphere where the

law of the strongest still reigns, of the dominant rather than the wise, a world where warlike and criminal brutality is still rife, in all kinds of turpitude related to the intellectual and moral inferiority of its inhabitants.

However, from the incarnation of the first humanoids* to the present day, many changes have taken place, representing definite advances, which have certainly been very gradual over the long development of civilisations in various parts of the world. And more recently, while there have been decisive scientific and technical developments for over a century, particularly in the fields of hygiene and medicine, there has also been significant progress from a political and social point of view when, for example, the omnipotence of a warrior leader or a monarch has given way to the apprenticeship of democracy, in the search for equality of citizens, affirmed in texts and to be put into practice in concrete structures. However, we are still a long way from a model of society that is fair and fulfilling for all human beings. But there is a perspective that is not necessarily very distant, a perspective of harmony and peace to be built on the condition of real change, which can be achieved if a majority of progressive human beings, undoubtedly among the youngest, manage to curb all conservatism in an awareness that is essential if we are to face up to the most imminent dangers that threaten, in particular, the environment, a problem obviously linked to that of overproduction and overconsumption that we will have to regulate, no longer out of ideology but out of necessity. Since wars are linked to economic supremacy, they could be reduced by the sheer urgency of the situation elsewhere, and a greater awareness on the part of an increasing number of human beings could be a factor for peace in the essential organisation of new models of society.

* Probable estimate: 5 to 6 million years old

THE DIVERSITY OF OTHER WORLDS

What would have seemed extraordinary a few centuries ago has come to pass, at least in our Western world, where the privileges of birth have been abolished, where the means of housing, food and healthcare have been improved, and where people are able to express themselves with complete freedom. Beyond these improvements, which only concern the most developed countries, the expected changes remain considerable, and yet the metamorphosis will have to take place, and in a progression that will necessarily pass through a true spirituality freed from dogma, in recognition of the beyond and of divine design. The Earth will then grow towards a model of society similar to that which exists on superior worlds.

On these distant, diverse and varied spheres, sometimes described by spirits, there are obviously great differences between one and another, but also in comparison with our Earth, the only reference available to us.

On the higher worlds, there can be great physical disparities compared to us, concerning the mineral and vegetable constitution, the nature of the atmosphere, the climates, the temperatures, even the flow of time according to the ecliptic and gravitation, etc. In the same way, the physical appearance of the inhabitants is very diverse, with however some constants, such as the fact of having a head, a trunk and limbs, at least as far as we know. Similarly, the physical appearance of the inhabitants is very diverse, although there seem to be a few constants, such as having a head, a trunk and limbs, at least as far as we know at present.

Spirits also tell us that there are higher planets dedicated to specialities, some to science, technology or medicine, others to the arts, and that these are linked to other worlds, insofar as at a certain level, frontiers no longer exist, and worlds communicate with each other, either physically or telepathically, when, starting from a

more ethereal biological matter, the physical surface is less than for us and communication, including with the disembodied, has become natural.

In the richness of creation and the ambient harmony, incarnated spirits can flourish in a particular setting appropriate to the missions they choose. While the higher planets may be specialised in a particular field, in the transcendence of evolution, there may also be fields that are foreign to us, and that we cannot even imagine or glimpse. By way of comparison, the conquest of space, genetic engineering, digital technology, or even cinema and television, would not have been imaginable in the Middle Ages, any more than they were in the eighteenth century known as the Age of Enlightenment. We cannot therefore imagine what might be unknown to us forms of art, unsuspected techniques or special energies of propulsion that we are certainly trying to guess at, thanks to the information provided to us by Spirits. In any case, let us have the humility not to pretend to understand everything about a Universe that still hides many secrets from us at this stage.

We do know, however, and this is easier to conceive, that the inhabitants of the higher spheres have integrated the notion of God into universal love. They have overcome the need for a mystical or religious quest, because divine truth no longer needs the support of belief or faith; it imposes itself in the evidence of love felt and shared, and also in the blurring, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the planet, of the boundary between the physical world and the world of spirits.

From a moral point of view, the more advanced the worlds become, the more the rivalries between beings, linked to pride, fade or disappear. Everything is then done, not for a particular interest, but to serve the general interest. And if differences continue to exist, it is no longer in opposition but in consideration of the respective qualities and capacities of beings who all have their aptitudes and their roles. The principles towards which we Earthlings still seek the absolute - justice, equality, freedom and harmonious fraternity - are values that have become realities. But let's also remember that these worlds went through similar stages of evolution to ours, and then gradually achieved peace and harmony, as part of the divine plan for the progress of individuals and worlds.

From a more pragmatic point of view, we know that the higher planets have erased the factitious differences that we still know between civilisations, cultures or ethnic groups; borders have been erased to the point where there are no longer any states. Instead, there is a kind of planetary governance, which implies a form of organisation, but in harmony between beings and the responsibility of all. Similarly, a universal language is generally spoken.

Technical developments are part of this evolution, which is not necessarily a form of destitution as depicted in the film "*La belle verte*", but, for example, by the use of means that can call upon nuclear fusion mastered by the thought force. Taking into account the more ethereal physical state of these advanced worlds, linked to a morality that is of the order of transcended love, also enabling a relationship with the afterlife, extraordinary possibilities are opened up, leading to forms of universal communication through interspace travel, which also explains UFO manifestations and even landings on our planet.

WHAT THE EARTH CAN BECOME

If these worlds can serve as models for our future on Earth, we also have the seeds of possibilities that have already been used on Earth.

As far as psychic faculties are concerned, for example, ancient civilisations such as the Druids had already mastered psychokinesis, levitation, radiesthesia and

telepathy, all of which were certainly not within the reach of everyone, but were lost over time in the absence of written transmission. And yet, these phenomena are being experimented with again here and there, providing proof of what is possible but still reserved for a few people with greater potential than others. In the future, these developments could be generalised through teaching that would be brought into line with advances in science, as we mentioned earlier concerning nuclear fusion, and all in relation to Spirits whose manifestation would be accepted by all.

And to extend this utopia, which is not a fiction, since it has already existed, contact with extra-terrestrial worlds could also contribute to the evolution of our globe, based on a true acceptance of their manifestation, which would no longer be considered as intrusive or malevolent. It is the rejection of their existence that deprives the Earth of a new light that could contribute to the emancipation of humanity.

Apart from these prospects of accepting other forms of life, we obviously have to start from where we are, to imagine what a model from elsewhere would be like and consider applying it.

Just think: on certain superior worlds, crime and war have been eradicated, and there is no longer any need for organisations that would be akin to our police forces, armies or prisons. All activity is then put at the service of developments useful to the emancipation and fulfilment of individuals, whether in the sciences, technology, the arts, and no doubt research disciplines of which we have no idea.

For the time being, therefore, we need to ensure the continuity of the fight against all the criminal and warlike scourges perpetuated by economic and financial systems that never cease to generate injustice, as if they were inevitable fatalities.

Other worlds, too, have experienced the procrastination of inferiority and have finally overcome the evil of pride and egoism; all things that could only be done gradually in successive stages.

This universal principle of the evolution of worlds, already affirmed in Allan Kardec's *The Book of Spirits*, is a constant in the words of Spirits; yes, every inhabited planet can and must find its emancipation through the recognition of its divine ontology and more precisely, as far as we are concerned, every human being must advance towards the recognition of his God, in order to direct his steps in *the direction of goodness and love of neighbour*, as Allan Kardec also said, the only perspective that also takes us back to the meaning of the original Christian message. In the words of the prophet Jesus, there were *many dwellings in the house of the Father*, one of them being the Earth. We need to emancipate it from models that are what we will become, not by force of circumstance, but by our will, our fight against all evils and our commitment to the service of all just causes, likely to get us out of the darkest plans that must not last any longer.

Let's also add that communication between inhabited worlds will become within our reach, once we have acquired a peaceful society that accepts the existence of extra-terrestrial entities, likely to visit us, or even to help us develop both our sciences and our spirituality, on a more universal level. This has already happened in the distant past, and often with a lack of understanding on the part of humans of another era, but today we are in a position to understand and assimilate the visit of beings from elsewhere, if we accept the meaning of interplanetary brotherhood, when we have first achieved fraternity between human groups.

Chapter 10

TOWARDS A SOCIETY OF PLANETARY PEACE

In other times, we spoke of patriotism, a concept that has become obsolete, because it represented the sole interest of a nation that had to preserve its territorial integrity. It was the fear of a neighbouring country turning into an invader, a situation that still exists in some parts of the world. But with exchanges of all kinds, we are coming to a much more universal and multicultural feeling, even if we all remain attached to our roots based on a particular history and geography. Tomorrow's world will be increasingly universal, without becoming uniform; it will be the end of narrow nationalisms and artificial borders. Humans will belong to an earthly community far removed from the barbarities of yesteryear, as recalled in this message of 11 November 2013 by the spirit of Georges Clemenceau: *"On this anniversary, a day of remembrance, I come in meditation in memory of all those men who were sent to fight in an atrocious war, only to die in often appalling conditions.*

No matter who attacked, no matter who was attacked, they were men! Men who had asked for nothing and who were nothing more than puppets in the hands of incompetent military leaders and of power games and profits under the thumb of a few political leaders. Although I may have been the victim of circumstances beyond my control, I was not fooled by the absurdity of those four years, blackened by bloodshed mixed with mud.

One war chases another one, wars chase other ones, and a form of dangerous romanticism perfumes the commemorative memory. Let us not forget, and I appeal to your conscience as beings of peace!

I continue to participate in the pacifist struggle in the afterlife, accompanied by former men from the front, anonymous poilus or more responsible officers, towards whom I have always had a great deal of respect and compassion".

If we are to move towards a peaceful society, we will also need to break free from the powers of speculative finance that rule the world. Albert Camus said in 1944: *"There can be no justice, freedom or peace when money is still king"*. The famous phrase "money is king" is a good illustration of the false value given to the accumulation of wealth, even though money, as a means of exchange to facilitate daily transactions, should be reconsidered in terms of the law, justice and dignity of everyone's income. Starting out as a simple means of facilitating exchanges, we have ended up with high finance in our system based on a capitalism of dividends paid, stock market and speculative rents, existing at the level of small shareholders as well as that of multinationals and big banks, where money generates money, for the benefit of rich minorities who have all the economic and financial power in the world. What's more, these consortiums are relocating their head offices in order to benefit from the best tax advantages, if not purely and simply to avoid paying tax. What's more, the financialization of the economy has led to money being produced virtually, independently of actual production, whether agricultural, industrial or otherwise.

The quest for unbridled profit is symptomatic of a liberal system based on individualism, which is still inventing false hopes of freedom through, for example, the "Uberisation" system, which isolates workers and impoverishes them while enriching flourishing groups that are always one step ahead when it comes to making substantial profits.

However, past experience had shown that a sound economic policy could be successfully implemented, while at the same time acting as a bulwark against war. This was the case with Franklin D. Roosevelt who, with his *New Deal* policy, defeated the rising tide of the American far right in the wake of the 1929 crisis by introducing a system of economic and social stimulus to combat unemployment. At the same time, the economic crisis in Germany opened the way for the rise of fascism.

Good governance as a factor of peace was also the policy of reconstruction after 1945, when in France the programme of the "*Conseil National de la Résistance*" can led to major social reforms such as the creation of social security, as well as the nationalisation of public service sectors such as transport, insurance and banking.

These are undoubtedly two past examples from which our countries could again draw inspiration, insofar as they are two median models that have made it possible to regulate unbridled capitalism, while avoiding a total collectivisation of the means of production of the Soviet type, according to the Marxist concept of a provisional dictatorship of the proletariat, which in every revolutionary attempt had led to the dictatorship of a single man.

ESCAPE FROM VIOLENCE

Violence has never been the solution to a problem, it has only incited retaliation in a never-ending escalation, as recalled during a spiritist session by a Spirit who lived through the French Revolution of 1789: "*We advanced thanks to the Enlightenment, by the force of Voltaire, by that of Montesquieu, by that of Diderot, and not by the guillotine. This century will advance through those who continue to think and not through those who believe they find their power in crime; it is only an illusion.*"

Violence is also the maintenance of warrior homes, a point on which the spirit of Charles de Gaulle made clear: "*Borders will never be erased by military force, they will be erased by the universal conscience of all mankind*".

We must also move towards the gradual elimination of armaments, as Jean Jaurès said: "*The peace of men on Earth rests on the idea of a balance of power, which is of course of a military nature. This concept is absurd and ineffective. The existence of weapons calls for the use of these same weapons in the more or less near future. What has been built up in this area must therefore be destroyed, and nations must be disarmed. There can be no peace if the forces of war are in balance.*"

Peace will be the result of universal disarmament. We must no longer talk about Europe, Asia or America, we must talk about the Earth. We must campaign for the abolition of borders and for globalism. Man must live in recognition of his own culture and history, but at the same time in the idea of what is common to the multitude, namely the simple truth of being a man among men, on the same globe".

Here again, there is a universal perspective that should guide our thinking. It should be noted, however, that the number of outbreaks of war is decreasing and that conflicts are more targeted, resulting in fewer victims than in the past on our battlefields of 1914-18, for example. If this is no consolation, it is at the very least a token of new hope that allows us to imagine further reductions in conflicts in the times ahead. This is not utopia, but progress that is within our reach and that we can accompany, if we think well and differently, with all the pacifist and humanist movements, but also with the help of the Spirits.

TOWARDS DISARMAMENT

One decisive direction addressed in the above message is that of general disarmament, a subject we touched on in Chapter 6, concerning the *Start 1* and *Start 2* arms limitation agreements, which fell far short of the plan that had previously been drawn up by Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s. He had planned a genuine programme for the gradual disappearance of all nuclear weapons after a few years. This unilateral proposal obviously had no chance of succeeding, but one man at least had the merit of proposing an honourable way out, which would have already removed from the planet a seventy-year-old anguish, that of the possible use of atomic weapons, in the memory of the spectre of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

As far as conventional weapons are concerned, the first thing to do is to think about doing away with chemical and bacteriological weapons forever.

An international convention came into force on 29 April 1997. Entitled the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction*, it aims to completely eradicate chemical weapons from arsenals around the world. However, some countries have not ratified the convention. The United States has eliminated 75% of its stockpile, with plans to neutralise the rest by 2023. Russia says it has destroyed all its stockpiles.

There are also anti-personnel mines, which have been banned by a convention, the *Ottawa Treaty*, which prohibits the production and use of these mines. But a convention cannot regulate everything, as in this case several countries refuse to sign up to the text, states that continue to produce these anti-personnel mines or that still possess considerable stocks of them.

We won't go into the more conventional weapons still used in various operations to maintain order and combat terrorism, weapons which will always be relevant as long as there are conflicts of territorial influence linked to economic or even ethnic supremacy. These weapons will only disappear with the retreat of dominant hegemonies.

FROM A RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

Sincere followers of different religions are beginning to converge. More and more often, believers of all religions are organising prayers together. For example, the Days of Peace were initiated by Pope John Paul II in 1986 in Assisi, Italy, where religious delegations of all faiths came to pray together for peace. This initiative has been repeated several times and taken up again by Pope Francis.

Human chains are also organised, like the one in India in 2013, which was forty-five kilometres long and brought together 40,000 people. These gatherings show that sincere human beings of all faiths and social categories are capable of coming together to share a common ideal of peace.

We can only endorse these mobilisations in which the Church is taking part, and here we quote an extract from Pope Francis' words for the 47^e World Day of Peace, on 1^{er} January 2014: *"The ever-increasing number of interconnections and communications that envelop our planet make more palpable the awareness of unity and of the sharing of a common destiny among the nations of the Earth. In the dynamics of history, as well as in the diversity of ethnic groups, societies and cultures, we see sown the vocation to form a community made up of brothers who welcome one another, caring for one another. Even today, however, such a vocation is often thwarted and contradicted by the facts, in a world characterised by this "globalisation of indifference", which slowly makes us "accustomed" to the suffering of others, by closing ourselves off from it."*

THE PEACEFUL SPIRITISM OF JAURÈS

The great Jaurès, a spirit of peace if ever there was one, and one of the instigators of the 1905 law on secularism, which he ardently defended, nevertheless wrote that the religious question should not be disdained. For him, even if religions are confining, they must converge and rediscover the sense of true spirituality from which human beings cannot separate. He himself had this peculiarity, unusual for a man who was very much on the left, of being a spiritualist, not religious but deist, based on his philosophical thinking.

In a way, he was echoing Allan Kardec's idea that religions could converge towards a common spirituality, implying for Kardec the recognition of the survival of the spirit and its reincarnation. The idea was that spiritism could bring everyone into agreement, which would eventually lead to the end of religions as such.

The immense hope for the evolution of our humanity is contained in the following statement from the spirit of Jean Jaurès:

"We Spirits and you, incarnate, belong to the same source. We are moving towards the divine point of convergence. We must do so with respect for the other, with freedom for the other. We must do so in the spirit of the Father's call for the progressive development of human dignity and, consequently, the gradual erasure of artificial frontiers, be they racial, political or financial. Man must reveal himself on this globe as an incarnate spirit aware of his responsibility and his ontology, that is, of his divine character. Peace among men, thirst of the heart, you must prevail over the war of evil spirits and their need for domination. Peace of men, you can prevail within the Christian social form, determined, established and thought out on the globe by men who, at last, will recognise themselves as sons of the Father outside of any form of definition."*

*The adjective Christian should be understood in the sense of the original message of Jesus, which emphasises love of neighbour, independently of the rites and dogmas instituted by the men of the Church over the last 2000 years.

ASSOCIATIVE HUMANIST STRUGGLES

Beyond the specifically spiritist work that can contribute to the effort for peace, we must obviously take into account all the human beings of good will who belong to various movements for the defence of rights and NGOs, such as *Amnesty International*, *Human Rights Watch*, etc., humanist movements that are capable of influencing oppressive powers and which, by dint of struggle, achieve certain results.

Secondly, as everything is linked in terms of the actions to be taken, we also need to consider what can be done by more established structures such as trade unions and progressive political organisations which, in recent times, have seemed out of breath due to a lack of unity and also a lack of fighters. It would be a good idea to bring new life and meaning into all these fading movements, which are the real guarantors of a more effective fight, on the sole condition that people once again join the structure that is closest to their convictions. A commitment of this kind will always be better than howling with the wolves the formula so often used: *"All corrupt, all rotten"*, a pretext for turning away from any fight, which is always a good reason to clear oneself and do nothing more. This simply means that in order to build peace, we also need to build politically and socially a world of renewal.

In most countries of the world, and by a contagion effect, the traditional political and trade union forces of progress are weakened to the point of being despised and rejected by populations who can no longer wait for better social conditions that are so slow to arrive. So, these movements and parties will have to reinvent and update

themselves, by listening carefully to a base that is no longer the same as it was yesterday, no longer a proletariat from industry, the mines or the steel industry, but a disparate group of wage earners or self-employed people who increasingly no longer have any real status, caught up in the new digital platforms, where collective agreements are practically reduced to nothing.

Alongside and outside these political structures, which need to resurface, there are other forms of struggle, less official, less framed or structured, but all waiting to blossom. Today, the jolt is coming from ecologists and other defenders of the environment, with young people on the move and active both in the streets and on the ground, carrying out boycotts and changing consumer habits (clothing, food, etc.). There are some interesting signs here, and they have the advantage of being concrete insofar as we are linking deeds to words.

If the demands for change can come from the grassroots, and they will, they will also have to organise and structure themselves, which has already been the case for ecologist political organisations for years, and here, as elsewhere, we will have to work to unify the movements so that we don't start out in a fragmented order.

Then there are other realities against which the battle is fiercer when we reach the terrain of the globalised economy, stock market finance and financial markets, with the steamroller of great powers such as the United States or China; we then have to think about other metamorphoses on a larger scale. And yet, more specific and localised actions are still likely to bend certain conglomerates that are, by definition, devoid of any moral compass.

In this sense, we can clearly see that the world's populations are fed up here and there, and are no longer inclined to let themselves be pushed around, which is why there is every reason to hope that discontent will then be relayed by powerful associations, strong trade unions, and counter-powers of all kinds with a sense of concrete responsibility. If the models of society are to adapt to a world that has changed very rapidly, we need rapid solutions with appropriate arguments, for a new way of approaching politics and the economy based on environmental urgencies. And from this point of view, it will be necessary to count on the rising forces of a global youth capable of significantly shaking up the foundations of the old world.

PEACE, A SPIRITIST PRIORITY

So, peace on Earth is one of our priorities on the spiritist level, and how could it be otherwise? For as long as Spiritism has existed, that is to say since Allan Kardec, we have known that the essential aspect of contact with the other world is not to lose oneself in futile and banal questions in search of a material treasure, but the quest for a spiritual treasure which is given to us by an understanding of the world and the meaning of our lives, through the metaphysics developed by Spirits over the last hundred and sixty years. And for Spirits, the key word since that time has always been *Evolution*, which is described in the preceding chapters but which also runs through all Spiritist literature, yes, the intellectual and moral evolution so evoked by Allan Kardec, which must eventually lead to the evolution of the whole planet, in its spiritual metamorphosis. There is no other ultimate goal than this, which obviously passes through successive stages of gradual progress on the levels of individual morality and social ethics, as we have tried to define in the preceding chapters.

And then, on a more specifically spiritist level, there are other stages which are part of a spiritual mutation in relation to the afterlife. These are actual mediumship and mediumship in development, enabling this relationship with the other world. The

determining factors here are the liberation of tormented and troubled spirits, and also the deliverance* of evil spirits who have had harmful influences on humans of the same ilk. In other words, disembodied spirits can accentuate disturbances and disorders that already exist in human beings.

Moreover, these deliverances* also make us understand another reality: all evil spirits who have been delivered are called upon to reincarnate with a certain consciousness, whereas without this, these spirits end up reincarnating instinctively attracted by matter and in a way of thinking that always reflects their state of inferiority.

In this sense, the deliverance* of these unhealthy spirits who discover the beginnings of consciousness through the spiritist path, is of great importance for the next incarnation, and in the long run will enable the moral level of the human community to be significantly improved.

As far as spiritism is concerned, a great deal of work and actions have already been carried out, and others are still to be undertaken, and all of this, in a way, contributes to the gradual development of a different society, and consequently any spiritist mission contributes to the construction of future peace.

Peace is a major cause that we support and for which many fluidic actions are undertaken. As Spiritists, we know the power of thought and its effects, enabling us in particular to alleviate the trouble of spirits tormented by various circumstances. But we can also direct our thoughts towards good spirits who, in complete freedom from their afterlife, continue to be concerned about the future of a planet on which they have lived and, for some of them, have oriented their last existence towards humanism, progress and peace. Some of these Spirits have fought for these causes, sometimes paying with their lives. These Spirits capture the fluids of our directed human thoughts and use them to influence and help good men and women, or conversely to mitigate the evil impact of the actions of certain incarnated beings driven by hatred and rejection of others.

In addition, a great deal has been done through regular chains of thought for a very long time, more specific thoughts for peace in every corner of the globe, thoughts addressed to all the Spirit Guides who have dedicated themselves to these actions. In reality, there is a permanent relationship between our two worlds, made real in the first place by the existence of the spiritual guides of each and every one of us, spirits who, while having great freedom, are close to us when we need their support. And secondly, all the Spirits who are good and relatively evolved are concerned about building peace on a world they themselves have known well.

At the same time, we need to rediscover God, the creative force from which we come, no longer the vengeful God of religions who alienates our consciences, but a God of love, without dogma or Church, whom we rediscover through the transcendence of spiritist contact, which makes us feel the sense of eternity, the sense of an aesthetic in the perpetual movement of nature, in the infinite race of the worlds that populate the universes, of which our Earth is only a tiny parcel. However, even if we are only a point in the infinite, our planet is not a negligible quantity, insofar as there are no worlds more important than others; they all have to be considered despite their infinitesimal dimension in relation to incommensurable universes. This is where the divine wonder lies, when we are caught between two realities, one material and down-to-earth, the other dizzying in the infinity of worlds inhabited by incarnate spirits who, like us, are journeying in search of an absolute.

As far as humanity is still concerned, it is both small in its evolution and great in its capacity to become, since it is destined to join its creator. When we speak of a creator, we are obviously referring to the divine force at the origin of our spirits, who have thus had a point of departure and whose distant future will merge with God in the reality of the pure spirit referred to in Allan Kardec's *The Book of Spirits*.

So, the key word of divine design is *Evolution*, an inescapable movement to which we are subject in order, through successive mutations, to advance towards our common destiny, inviting us to grow in consciousness, which means growing in responsibility, freedom and love.

On the curve of time, from one existence to the next or in the phases of life beyond, we move forward in the quest for the divine, but realism also requires us to fully consider the importance of life as it is now, here and now, not to wait any longer, and to act with all our spiritual strength for a peace to be built, day by day, from a fairer and more natural approach to the idea of God.

*Deliverances: Spirits hardened in evil are of little evolution and have never yet glimpsed the idea of a God. Their deliverance by spiritual means constitutes a first flash of consciousness as to the divine and natural notion of a love that is given to them.

Groups of evil spirits in close proximity, having belonged to the same movement on Earth, have often been delivered simultaneously. A strong, hardened spirit has been able to drag others in its wake, and the deliverance of one has often led to the release from their torpor of many others who were fascinated by its domination.



Faced with the major challenges facing the world's societies in the future, Spiritism can shed a particular light on a new vision that brings spirituality into play. There are, of course, many humanist struggles which, from an ethical point of view, are no different from Spiritist options, and this is where all people of goodwill come together, whatever their philosophical convictions.

The laws revealed by the spirit world are natural principles emanating from a transcendent power of creation and infinite love. The existence of God explains the facts of life, the continuity of the spirit beyond death and the intellectual and moral evolution of the soul through the law of reincarnation.

On this basis, it becomes possible to approach the major issues of civilisation and society in a way that is not based on the arguments of philosophical materialism. This is what is explored in this book, in the light of messages from the beyond and based on a reflection that takes into account the major principles of spiritualist philosophy.

The co-authors of this book are the representatives and leaders of three branches of the Cercle Spirite Allan Kardec, Colombe Jacquin in Lyon, Jacques Peccatte in Paris and Luc Gruntz in Belfort.