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## **Eight changes (or untwists) of mind ...and our fundamental problem of addiction**

Einstein used to say that a problem cannot be solved by the same mentality as the one which has generated it. This means that we have, today in our modern western culture, to go through a radical change of mind or way of thinking if we want to resolve the present triple crisis of climate change, economic collapse and democratic failure.

We will describe here eight principal necessary cultural leaps or mental shifts. They represent successive ways to undo the inversions that our modern era has imposed onto the natural laws of life. We have indeed to reverse these main inversions or to undo the twists we have created if we want to recover our mental health.

Here are these eight untwists. You will probably feel first that they are excessively idealistic. But, if you observe better, you will notice that this first reflex of rejection is due to the fact that these descriptions simply go against the grain of our social setting and that they are yet indeed in deep harmony with what we can call the laws of life, i.e. the inherent flow of natural vitality if life is truly rooted in humanity and compassion.

### **1 - Meaning of Life as compassion**

The evolution of our society is led today by the laws of economics although these laws, in a restricted way, concern only the very practical and narrow aspects of our material life, and not the much wider concern with the true purpose of life in general. It is evident that the true energy of life is not money (a tool) but our humanity (our nature). Facing the present crisis we have to choose whether we prefer to continue to accumulate wealth and money for ourselves, in an egocentric race that favours material comfort over human relationships. Or whether we do not prefer to nourish a special compassionate quality in the way we relate to one another and live together as a community and to have in this way the possibility to delve into the richness of true experience.

These two fundamental attitudes generate opposed qualities of life. The former favours competition, domination, exploitation, violence, destruction because it has to exhaust everything it touches. It is what climate change demonstrates without ambiguity. The latter favours cooperation, care and sharing in a creative spirit of nonviolence and generosity because it values what is already given in people.

The former is never satisfied and needs ever more; the latter is happy with very little and thrives in immaterial values such as equity, peace, joy and love. What is the meaning of Life? Compassion? Let's make a decisive choice today and adopt a clear stand.

## **2 - Inevitable integration with the laws of the wider context**

The present crisis is the sign that we, as a society, are not capable to live in harmony with our planet and our fellow human beings. We want to impose our own ways without looking at the real consequences. We believe we know, in the name of our own representation of science, technology and market, and we refuse to see that we have to integrate into a given context: nature, an infinite diversity of species, our Planet, the Universe. These are existing forces and bodies which are regulated by universal laws we cannot change: the alternation of days and night and of seasons, the cycles of reconstitution of resources and absorption of wastes, gravity, biodiversity, complementarity, cooperation and so many others. Our context defines what is possible and what is not, what harmony is and what it is not.

But we do not listen. We are blind and want to dominate. We are inhabited by a macho attitude that is deaf and insists to take what is not available. It is why we need definitely to learn how to adopt a more feminine attitude of care, receptivity and to nourish what is given to us: our families, friends, neighbours and the strangers who visit us as well as the milieu in which we live. We need to adapt.

We do not own our country but we belong to the land and our community. Living in harmony brings peace. We are vassals and not masters.

## **3 - Technology at the service of a human vision**

Technology has replaced meaning because we consider it as the all-fitting solution to all our problems, especially the problems created by technology.

Facing climate change it becomes strikingly evident. We talk of alternative technologies for producing energy (solar, wind), of electric cars for solving problems of transport, of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration into disaffected mines, into soil, forests or materials, of hydrogen as an infinite source of energy, etc. But none of these technologies is sufficiently developed to offer now (immediately) a definitive solution. They are all dreams in the future. And, as all technologies, they have also their own limits and flaws and negative effects, as did the technical means which have created the problems we are facing now.

There are in fact not enough resources on the Earth to produce enough batteries and solar panels and electric cars for seven billion people. It is like the dream of biofuel in the 90s: although biofuel is a good idea as such, we have to face the evidence that we would need many planets to produce the necessary quantities, while depriving ourselves from the necessary food.

Of course these technologies (especially solar and wind) can help but they can only be used in a fundamentally new approach of conceiving their use, in a restricted measure of real needs and availability which means a drastic reduction of consumption.

But more radically there is another truth which is still more powerful: climate change is much more than a problem to be fixed by technical means. It is about our ways of living and our culture which are in complete conflict with our planet. It is mainly about the increasing gap between the rich and the poor. The urgent need today is inevitably to reduce our material standard of living (things) by a factor 4 in average in rich countries, or even 10 for most of us, and to focus on more immaterial values (human qualities). And to share equitably what is available, not only where we live, between social classes, but also between rich and poor countries (the other  $\frac{3}{4}$  of human kind).

It does not mean we will lose much. It means only we have to reconvert our activities in order to consume much less and focus on other priorities such as joy of relationships and pleasure in

beauty and justice or just creativity. Everything has still to be created for this new purpose. It is very exciting. And poor people can also teach us how to do that.

And the great advantage of this (new?) option is that it provides equity for all. We will not need anymore, as the 10-15% of privileged western people, to live at the expenses of the others (the two thirds of humanity who live on 2% of world wealth).

To guide us on this creative path, we need a wider human vision of who we want to be, as persons and as humanity, a vision not only of climate change but also of justice change, of meaning change. Practically it means replacing our sources of energy by renewable sources before 2030, and dividing our consumption by 4 in average, much more for the rich, much less for the poor.

This reconversion will create a more just society and make us happier people.

#### **4 – Three poles of actors: people, governments, corporations**

First, one important well established fact: human-generated climate change has been the result of our excessive consumption in energy and resources since the industrial revolution. We, the 15% (at the most 20%) of relatively privileged people living in richer nations (North America, Europe, Japan, Australia) – minus the poor people of these countries (almost a quarter!), plus the rich elites of poor countries – we have generated climate change through the slow addition of many apparently limited and insignificant acts of individual consumption. But the aggregate of all these small facts has generated the fantastic collapse we observe nowadays. There are indeed no other actors than us, the people. It is sure that the two thirds of people who live on 2% of world wealth are not the problem!

At the same time the good news is that, if we could generate so many imbalances, we are also in the same way able to radically reverse the present process of collapse. Again: we are indeed the only possible actors, we are the main actors. Nobody else will do it for us: no government, no corporation, no church, no wise people. Yet we nevertheless do not stop claiming that governments should take drastic measures to mitigate climate change. But it is evident that these governments cannot act without us. We even prevent them from acting by our inertia and attachment to the present ways of living and we prevent them also from acting by our lack of awareness. Our governments are indeed at our image: they represent us fully, in their paralysis as well as in their excesses.

We need in fact to distinguish three groups of actors which have, each one, their very specific role to play in complementary ways:

- 1) **We, the citizens-workers-consumers:** We are the main and first actors because we have to initiate the change by changing our own ways of living. This is not something that can be imposed unto us, unless by a totalitarian regime. To avoid these measures to be imposed from the top, we have then to show democratically (i.e. through free will and our daily lives) our determination to reduce our material standard of life (because it creates the problem by overproduction and overconsumption) and we have to put pressure on governments to implement the necessary institutional changes (legislation, finance, taxes, international agreements) as well as the urgent adaptation of larger infrastructures.

The great obstacle to this move of self-empowerment is that we need for that what we miss in fact the most: a personal understanding and integrated awareness (in our heart and guts more than in our head) of what is at stake and especially a strong personal motivation to address together (you and me as a unified community that is more than just the addition of different individuals) the issues that threaten us. If we can unite, we can form the most

effective force. There is nothing indeed more participative than our marketing and democratic society, if we are courageous enough to take the necessary stand. Even our present inertia is an expressive form of participation. And our impact will be still widely increased if we dare to become proactive.

- 2) **Governments** on their parts have to set the frame and targets, especially in terms of quality and not only of technologies or finances or legal frame: regulations that encourage what is needed and prevent what is harmful, radical measures for equity and justice, priority given to public well-being, disinvestment from discarded forms of production, investments in priority sectors (renewables, transport), subsidies to emerging local economy, courageous employment politics to facilitate the transition, revision of the tax system for more justice, recuperation of capital and tax evasion, equitable redistribution of wealth, cooperative international agreements, restrictive trade regulations that prevent introduction of products that do not satisfy local criteria.

In its vocation politics is not a field of competition for power but should be the perception of a social long term vision that inspires the whole community. We need a wider perspective which will frame our project for a complete reconversion.

This reconversion has to happen in the next ten years, taken into account that scientific previsions are always underestimated (clause of precaution), that imbalances (collapse) work with ever increasing speed (acceleration) and that natural systems have a tremendous inertia. This means that our action has to be very quick (max 10 years) but will have yet only very slow effects (min 50-100 years), except that it will stop generating more destruction (immediate effect). The usual political target of 2050 for carbon neutrality and zero emissions is in this sense completely unrealistic; it has to be 2030. Yes, it is harsh, but we have to try to reach this more realistic target.

We probably should also aim at a maximum increase of 1°C above industrial times - although this increase is already effective today - (instead of 1.5°C). In aiming at 1°C we have more chances to reach 1.5°C.

If we act, as ordinary people, at our own level in changing the way we live, it will generate a political and electoral pressure on governments and they will have to act as soon as we will take a clear stand, unless democracy is disabled.

- 3) **Corporations** are on their part powerful agents which do not renounce any means to defend their own interests. The corporations linked with fossil fuels are the main promoters of climate change because they do all they can to maintain their monopoly at the expenses of our dependency. They produce what they want, and block what they do not want. They are shaping the general economic frame through their own power of deciding what is on offer and what is not. They invest considerable sums in false propaganda describing climate change as something natural we have no influence upon. They are lobbying the governments and give high amounts of “donations” to different political parties or actors to ensure their support. As workers and consumers, we have indeed limited possibilities to change this general frame. We have mostly to adapt to work conditions and employment possibilities. Our dependency on fossil fuels depends also on larger strategies that escape often our control and even our good will.

But these main corporations project also an image of what is success or even happiness in terms of advertisements and fashion. Most of these corporations are powerful agents which we kind of worship. Big brands sell well because we buy them and we follow fashion. If we want we can reappropriate ourselves some part of this incredible power as customers. Microsoft, Apple, Google, Facebook, Nike, Adidas, Monsanto, Unilever, Exxon Mobile,

etc... seem strong and out of reach but they rely also mainly on us because they produce only what we use as users and consumers. Our level of power depends of course on how much we need them for our own survival. Our local employer has in fact probably more power on us than these big brands. It is nevertheless essential that we may discover how much we can resist their power, at least on a personal level, if we cannot resist globally by lack of insurgents. As an ethical choice it should become evident that we have to stop supporting them. Many alternative products exist which do not feed the monsters: alternative sustainable brands, open resources, etc. If we decide to and succeed to create a large movement of resistance, these big brands will have to adapt to our wants, when we take back control of our own consumption. The problem for this strategy is evidently how much we are attached to them, their products or simply the “positive” image of us we believe the consumption of their products generates. We are indeed often held hostages by very futile attachments and deep illusions!

Do I buy meat in plastic rapping at the shopping centre or just vegetables from the corner shop? Do I want to fly, drive, buy Chinese? Of course these choices have a strong impact on our own way of life. It is probably why we do not want to see how powerful we can be, because it is at a price, at a price that is worth paying because our lives are now under threat. Time to open the eyes!

Of course it is also essential that activities of corporations be regulated by a severe national legislation (role of the state) that can impose quality standards and may prevent them from not fitting into a wider social project.

We can observe how these three categories of actors and roles (us, governments, corporations) are in fact very complementary and how they need each other to act. We, as ordinary people and citizens, nevertheless remain the real initiators. We are the only ones who can start the process. Without our action governments and corporations cannot act by fear of losing their support (electors or consumers). Let's start now.

## **5 - A true direct democracy at local level**

The collapse of economy (globalisation, domination of finance, speculation, exploitation) has generated a deep anger among people, mainly in rich countries, who see their life conditions degrade under the impact of globalisation and social security dissipate under the impact of austerity measures imposed by major institutions (governments, IMF, WB). This anger is the favourable soil for seeds of populism, hate and xenophobia. It is a fertile ground of anxiety that absorbs easily false news and distorted versions of information which spread through social media at a high speed. Many media have become also active agents of this sort of strategy of lie and the honest commentators have a steep struggle to lead against these dark forces. This degradation of democracy is not a hazardous flaw. It is the fruit of a determined will of main interests to dominate and control or restrict public opinion.

Our postmodern era has invented a kind of discourse where there is no more truth. It is as if there were only different opinions which are meant to be all equally valid. People in power behave in shocking ways that defy common sense, ethics and legality. And it seems impossible to stop them. Globally, as ordinary people, we have also lost the faculty to discern what truth is and how we want to protect it. On the other hand there is no political vision for the future. Neither among politicians nor among the public. Both lacks of vision reinforce each other.

The electoral system is not even representative of public opinion. With the system of one single representative by electorate (2 party system - the winner takes all) some MPs are elected with only between 40 and 50% of the votes. This reinforces the position of the two main parties and

prevents minority groups from being represented, even if this “minority” is supported by as much as one third of the citizens. It leaves in this way more than half of the population without political representation in parliament.

Parliament should indeed not be the battle field for rivalries between two factions (which are indeed so similar to each other) but rather a place for a wider debate about our future and the quality of society we want to build. This debate needs to be anchored in local life where people live and where one can find the best competency and knowledge of specific local conditions. Democracy is not an institutional process but a culture that must remain alive to be effective. It is why we need a form of local direct democracy. The form of citizen councils, as local assemblies of a few selected citizens, seems to be very appropriate because it will give back power to local people and it will offer opportunities for each citizen who is involved to learn more about the issues and the possible solutions. Competence is best at local level because it is where people have the best knowledge of what is, through their daily experience. Citizen councils will also stimulate social and political awareness and empower people. It will be the place where true democracy can happen, despite the fact so many forces are acting against it. Let’s start now to reorganise democracy in a lively form through our own practice.

Individualism has destroyed our capacity to belong and to see how much our personal well-being depends indeed on the thriving of the local community. We all depend on one another. We need urgently to rediscover the art of belonging to the local community and to the land, and to reappropriate ourselves the ability to choose what matters most.

We need also to learn the art of consensus where diversity leads to an enriched combination of complementary skills and does not prevent different participants from finding a common ground when everyone accepts to give up minor preferences in order to reach a common agreement about the essential. We know that anything we cannot include in this consensus will be managed by external actors at their own advantage, it means at our expenses. Let’s then consolidate together what we all truly value. This will be true direct democracy.

## **6 – Money as a simple tool**

At its early stage of evolution, human kind used to practise agriculture and other similar natural resources as our first our main sources of subsistence. Then we learned, at industrial times, to transform these resources thanks to the use of new energies which allowed generating surpluses and profit. Later, in last century, services became more dominant because they could be more profitable when they were more disconnected from matter. Then finally finance has taken now the upper hand. We evolved away from the reality test of matter.

Through speculation one can earn money without doing anything useful. The stock exchange is the new model. Investors earn fantastic sums while workers earn less and less. Share of national wealth due to work diminishes progressively and constantly in regard to share of wealth due to speculation.

This gigantic artificial financial system, based on illusion rather than production of useful goods, absorbs a lot of wealth in private hands and deprives the community of the essential means for enabling necessary renewable development.

In its practical form money should indeed be only a means for value transfer. The ox we used earlier to barter can fit in our pocket and can be divided in small pieces and go to different recipients. Money is only a practical support for transfer and it should not have any value as such.

In most traditions of the past, usury (capital invested with interest rate) is banished. We know that wealth is generated more or less directly by the whole community and it should ethically remain accessible to all. Wealth is in general the produce of collective effort (natural resources, public knowledge, training, infrastructure). It is in fact always linked with the context. It is never the fruit of only personal effort. This involvement of all is the reason why there should be no interest rate. Instead of investing for egocentric financial profit purposes we should learn to invest into common good as a service which would profit everybody in terms of quality. The reward is not an interest rate but a shared profit in terms of quality, and not money.

Instead of interest rate life index could be calculated in order to keep the value of the capital in terms of purchasing power. Investors would then see their capital re-evaluated in order to keep its value and to yet be invested in a useful purpose for the well-being of their community, of which they will be also beneficiaries.

If the practice of interest rates and stock exchange could be prevented, or at least the rate limited to life index, a lot of capital would be liberated that is now invested for individual profit purposes only. Combined with state subsidies and recuperation of evasion capital and taxes, as well as the cessation of subsidies to harmful activities (fossil fuels), it would largely finance the investments which are now needed for reconversion.

Small local investors will then secure their capital which is threatened now by investment in non-productive and harmful sectors such as mining or speculation and which will soon lose much value when these sectors cannot develop anymore. The investors would all gain in power of control if they better control the field of their influence and be able to encourage local initiatives that seem fruitful.

They would bring their necessary support to the consolidation of a local economy that may ensure local relative self-sufficiency, subsistence and resilience. This form of local economy that provides the essential goods we need for survival has been dismantled so far under the impact of globalised competition. It needs to be reconstituted in simple but solid ways.

The use of local currency would also help to keep the wealth to circulate locally. This is indeed already a model of money that is used only for transfer of value, without interest rate. It works well and even thrives where it is implemented!

## **7 - Production for needs only**

After defining the role of money we need to see also the wider frame and how it fits into the general picture of production and consumption.

Since the industrial revolution our modern society can produce surpluses and get higher profit from production because of the abundance in energy and work (machines). This new opportunity has completely changed our system of production that, instead of aiming at satisfying elementary needs, becomes a means to accumulate wealth. Profit replaces purpose. Surpluses mean overproduction that needs to generate overconsumption to be absorbed. A wider market is needed: through advertising, fashion, export, globalisation, etc. Broader possibilities for buying are offered to consumers through credit which means increasing debt for all (individuals or states).

Yet market extension means also sharper competition between the many actors who extend to the wider market. This competition means that production, in order to beat competitors with lower prices, must reduce its cost through quantity production, mechanisation, reduction of wages, cheaper material, simpler design, bad quality, delocalisation to countries with lower wages or less protective standards (social security, ecology), etc... In such a mad pattern of

extension, infinite growth on a limited planet is the only possible escape forwards: towards the edge of the cliff. All these factors have created the present situation where poverty ever increases and gap between rich and poor does too; where climate change illustrates what is really at stake: the progressive degradation of our society and the collapse of justice and equity.

This evolution has brought our economic system to the nonsense we observe today. Price becomes the main criteria for choices although it is not at all representative of what is at stake. It does not measure properly the real value but only market conditions; it does not consider values without price (justice, peace, biodiversity, humanity); it does not measure sense of purpose (weapons or education); it is measured with a yardstick that varies constantly like a rubber measure (exchange rates, inflation, currency). Yet we calculate everything with it: GDP, wealth, growth, health of economy, etc. All our indicators are in this way falsified. No wonder we get into the ditch.

This essential failure means that production has to be redesigned in a fundamentally different way. It needs first to be drastically reduced and organised according to real needs, in durable terms. Goods must be completely biodegradable, recyclable and repairable, with only materials which can re-enter the natural cycles. For instance a warranty of ten years should be provided and repair kits made available for each product.

Our consumption can also, and needs to, be much reduced if it has to answer only more fundamental and essential needs. We will easily learn to live a simple life with less if we stop defining our identity in terms of consumption and possession (in both senses of the word). Who owns what? Do we own goods as simple and practical tools in terms of purpose and usefulness for all? or do fashion and prestige own us in terms of slavery? Our choice to be free!

If we want to better control the way we produce, we need to produce more locally. Each region should provide as much as possible for its main basic needs. Local life makes everything more transparent and understandable. It will make us also more sustainable, self-sufficient and resilient. It is why small remains beautiful. But this apparent restriction does not exclude exchange, especially if it is not material. Transport is then easy for knowledge, ideas, thoughts, emotions, culture, art, etc. What matters most is how we share what we produce and how we care that each one has what he or she needs. If we are the 15%, let's the other 85% participate fully too!

## **8 – Escaping our position as spectators and becoming real actors**

The evolution of our economy away from matter (dominant role of services and especially finance at the expense of work as transformation of matter) has generated for us a tendency to lose our rootedness in reality. The increase of artificial comfort (urbanisation, air conditioning, smooth and quick transport) and the development of new technologies of artificial intelligence or communication have forced us into a kind of virtual world whose truth and reality has become hard to test. We have lost the sense of physicality, weight, inertia, distance, duration, effort, patience, difference, etc.

We live in a kind of limbo outside real life. Because of this form of passive marginalisation, we are also ever more confined to a role of spectators. We spend a huge amount of time in front of screens: computers, mobile phones, social media, websites, videos, news, debates, commentaries. We are only spectators, or watchers, or even indecent voyeurs, of what others do. We feel we are active and well informed but we are only absorbing what is poured onto us. Because we have lost direct contact with reality, we cannot make ourselves a representation of our world we could test. We tend to live ever more in fiction, in a virtual world.

The general use of money has also participated in ejecting us from a human network of direct and personal exchanges. We acquire everything we need through money: food at the shopping centre, energy, transport, ditto. And most public services are paid for by tax money: health, education, infrastructure. We are rarely in direct contact with our neighbours, sharing our skills. We became the cogs of a gigantic production system which has replaced relationships by money.

Social media are a powerful means for communication. But it can be used both ways. Each participant tends to depict an image of oneself that is pleasing. This tendency is natural, but does it bring a true picture? Does it not create instead a false image that developed by being repeated. False news, bullying, propaganda spread at high speed on social media. And there is no clear limit between the small white lie and the big hoax. How to know what is true?

The internet is probably one of the most powerful means ever of sharing knowledge. It is an important tool for liberation from oppressing regimes. But there is always the doubt about the source, especially when malwares invade the system or publicity tricks us into unclear waters where we are manipulated. How can trust cohabit with corruption? The tool is good but how to protect it from misuses?

Artificial intelligence becomes a real threat to our democracy. Surveillance, collection of data, intrusion in our lives, and even suspicion or judiciary processes are often started from unjust use of such means.

Activism has also taken a new form. It communicates through social media. Large grassroots movements use the internet to spread information. It has a wide impact on awareness and it allows touching people who would not be reached. But there is also an essential doubt about the effectiveness of online petitions. Save the Amazon or rhinoceros or Rohyngas by one click of the mouse! This is not credible, although positively it raises also awareness and probably has a small psychological impact on some leaders. Is it not an illusory passive form of activism that has indeed no (or delusive) impact ever on reality? Piles of petitions accumulate on a desk. Governments remain deaf to what is said. They will in any case meet us at the next elections when they know each one will think again in terms of egocentric life conditions. Forgotten the Amazon, the rhinos and the Rohyngas.

We need to learn now how to escape from these illusory forms of one-click-of-the-mouse or social-media activism. As a society we are stuck in this role of marginality, as spectators. It is time we become active again. Not in petitions and demonstrations (although they have their role to play in complementarity) but mainly as real actors who impact on reality and take control back. Remember: our computer is only an instrument that produces bits. If these bits do not translate into a change in real life, it remains not only useless but also even harmful, not because it is bad as such but because it gives the illusion of action although nothing has changed.

We have to rediscover how to be directly involved here and now in our physical and social reality. It is a harsh recognition because it requires from us that we mobilise all our energy to change how we do daily what we do daily. We are then back into a world of physicality, weight, inertia, distance, duration, effort, patience, difference, etc. It is evidently more effort, but it is also so much more real and effective than sitting in front of a screen that does not care what we feel or think. And we are again together as human beings in direct contact, working on same issues with the same quality of courage.

Our life is the only tool we have for change. It is also where life happens for each of us.

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## **The great hurdle of addiction**

We have described so far the eight necessary changes of mind or eight untwists that we need to bring through. We can recognise how far they appear to go against the grain of our market and power culture but also how they seem at the same time so much more in tune with the essence of our humanity. We can recognise in them the values that we practise with our family or neighbours. Why not apply the same principles to our wider social life and political settings? Is there a reason why the same values should not apply?

Once we have passed the hurdle of disbelief and we start believing it is possible to transform the way we feel and think, we see the road reopen. But then appears another hurdle which is indeed the main if not the only real hard obstacle on our path to transform our society into a more harmonious body. This hurdle is never talked about: this is our addiction.

The main problem of addiction is that it is generally denied by the people who most suffer under it, until they open the eyes and recognise their state and start then to react. It is why we will not accept first to recognise that we are addicted to our way of life: addicted to comfort, to money, to consumption, to mobility, to technology, to publicity, to fashion, to illusion, to virtuality, to screens, to be spectators, consumers, etc. No, we will resist this truth because it challenges radically the way we live.

Our addiction is characterised by two main trends: First it seems we believe that material values can make us happy. We are ready to sacrifice most of our lives chasing comfort and pleasure in material things that indeed do not satisfy our deepest appetite for freedom and joy and love. We remain always dissatisfied each time the pleasure has passed over. We remain like empty of true identity. There is evidently a deep illusion that lets us believe we get our social identity from our social status: how powerful we are, how rich we are. It is as if our identity would depend on our wealth. Who are we behind our social status and what we own? Nothing much if this identity depends on what we own. But our identity can be yet much better rooted in who we are if we dare to concentrate on human values and if we concentrate on relating with others. Then we can truly be seen and recognised as a person. It is clear that our deeper identity does not depend on our wealth. We have to learn to become free of this terrible illusion that drives most of us in our social life.

The second trend of our addiction is that it is reinforced by what the others do. We are all the time trying to situate ourselves on the social ladder of wealth and power and we never stop comparing ourselves with the people who are just above us. Whatever we have, it is never enough because there is always someone who has more. We want to imitate and rise on this ladder although we know very well it is measured by false yardsticks. Imitation and aspiration to social climbing prevents us from seeing that we indeed have already more than everything we need. We are obsessed by the fact 1% of world population own some half of world wealth. And we want to be part of this small percent or at least be inspired by the way these people live. And we do not want to see that we are indeed already part of a very restricted “privileged” elite which consumes an equivalent part of wealth among only 10% of all people. We refuse to see our privileges because we never stop thinking that we could and should have more. Indecent! And it seems that our present wealth gives us a right to have ever more. Because we are rich we think we have more “needs” and we are entitled to satisfy them. It does not matter that the majority of people live with so much less than we do. That, we do not want to see! We should in fact relax and reduce drastically our standard of life. What a relief it would be, for us as for the planet as also for the ones who want to imitate us because we are just a bit richer than they are. But we are not free to do so, because we are obsessed by the fact we are not above the people who come just before us. What an absurdity that yet makes our addiction so consistent!

Something must be said: our addiction is indeed the only real obstacle to immediate action against climate change and economy or democracy collapse. We know the ways how to solve the problems, but we wait for the others to act or we act passively by one-click-of-the-mouse. We have even developed a lot of different strategies to justify our position: it is too late, we have to organise resilience more than renewability, governments should act, corporations are the culprits, the rich 1% who own half of world wealth must show the way, too many Chinese or Indians who will consume more and more, etc.

It becomes evident that we will destroy our planet and then all die (except a minority of privileged or lucky people) if we wait for these so-called culprits-by-inaction to act instead of us.

Or we can also heal from our addictions and be free to come back to life. The choice is ours. For each of us. Not waiting for others to change before we change. Healing from our addiction should indeed not be too hard, because, as it has been shown, the eight twists are only illusions. It means that the eight untwists are an authentic return to the reality of life. And also to a real quality of life.

Who does not want to make the choice for life?

### **A personal final note**

I would like to finish this description by a personal note. It seems to me that all the eight untwists that we have described here have very much something in common with indigenous traditions and heritage. For each of these topics we have described, we have something to learn from First Nations people. They are indeed much more competent than us on these matters. And the Uluru Statement from the Heart says it clearly too. There is indeed a great similarity between the challenge of climate change and the call of the Uluru Statement. They are for me the two sides of the same coin. They reveal the same challenges to which our society is confronted. They have also in common that they cannot both be answered by technical or legal fixes but they have to be fully embraced by compassion.

It calls us to change the register on which we live our lives. It calls us back home where we all belong, in our common humanity that is rooted in life. It is why it is so important to learn how to listen and to rediscover our indigenous roots, because it is where we all come from, all of us, even if it was so long ago.

It is not a new attempt to profit once more from indigenous people and pull out of them what we need. No, it is, in great respect, a way to value who they are and to recognise that we can learn from them how to find back our own indigenous roots in our own humanity. Of course they remain free to share their wisdom with us, or not.