“Pour une révolution du sens”

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I am 22 years old, starting a PhD, my dream, and I do not even know if I am going to pursue it afterwards. Why? Because I feel like I am digging in the wrong direction. I feel like science is madly part of a problem, the problem. It seems we are trying to save the world with the same tools that are destroying it, with the same way of thinking that is digging its own grave. This is why, for the first time in my life, I am not going to follow the instructions. I am not going to follow the rules, the conceptual framework of prestigious academics: clean, rational, objective, cold.

I am not here as an expert, I do not need to be one to give my opinion on what is happening on Earth. I am human and I can see, that is enough. I see hundreds of species fading away each month. I see thousands of humans dying of hunger, pollution or suicide each week. I see millions of animals being killed each day for no fundamental reason. I see forests disappearing and mountains collapsing to make way for roads. I see people addicted to social media, I see people turning in on themselves, I see news being easily faked, I see a disaster. I see scientists losing hope. I see the elderly being blind. I see kids with sadness. Not only because of climate change, which is a symptom, but because of the society we built. Life is not disappearing because of climate change or CO2 emissions, but because of our intrinsically murderous activities. Those facts are not projections. This is now, and the future might be even worse if we do not do something. Perhaps the worst would be to discover a new way to produce a huge amount of energy without polluting, because then nothing would stop us from destroying the landscape. Before such a discovery is made, we must change our value system. With the exception of a few fools, who would want to buy humans nowadays, as in former times? Hopefully, not anyone reading these lines. Why? Because we changed our value systems, our ways of thinking, our perspectives on life. Who would like to buy, kill, and eat animals nowadays, in 2023? Hopefully, more people than in 2050. Who would like to buy a yacht, drive a Ferrari, or travel all around the world when we know this is directly and literally destroying life on Earth and our children’s hope? Please do not miss my point, I am not judging anyone. I am arguing that a change in our system of values would change our ways of living and how we share the world with others. People don’t want a yacht because they love the sea, otherwise they would get a sailboat. People want a yacht for the social message it carries. But what if we change the message? What if owning a yacht or driving a Ferrari was suddenly associated with an environmental delinquency? Of course, there

is an uncontrollable part in our desires, a magic part, unexplained. But there is also a space for decision-making, there is a space for us to influence what we like or not. We need to change our point of view on many things. As far as possible, walking to our workplace instead of taking the car should be seen not as a constraint but as an opportunity. An opportunity to observe the street architecture, to have some physical activity and a bit of time to think about ourselves. But, you might say how, how can we change our value system? I am not talking about the potential of mass publicity, because the quest for a massive effect is actually one of the values that are ruining the world. Instead, we need to talk. Let's face diversity, real diversity. We don't need to fly to Japan or Nigeria to meet alterity. Crossing the road and really talking to homeless people, a baker or even our neighbor might be enough. Let's spread the word of peace, empathy and love. Let's embrace our children, our grandparents, as well as strangers. Damon Centola explains brilliantly "how to make big things happen" in this way.

But above trying to be more communicative, empathic, human, what can we do, concretely? I am not going to recount evidence. I am here precisely to fight the dominating dogma of finality, the productivism and pragmatisms in which we are enclosed. This writing is intended to be ideological, poetic, creative. I don't want to give a program, rules, or even worse: a method. I want to open up a breathing space. We all know that insulating our houses, sorting our waste, and taking the bus instead of the car promises a better future. But maybe not all of us know that this is not going to be enough. We need a complete and global paradigmatic change, at least in our "developed" occidental world. This is not a technical problem, but an axiological one. As a human who is dealing with science daily, I am going to talk about this problem. Science is an immense space for efficiently describing the world. It is so effective that we forgot that there are other ways to describe it. Nowadays, science has a hegemonic status and overshadows the other prisms, such as painting, poetry, or music. So dominant that you would probably say that my last sentence was absurd. But van Gogh's De sterrennacht, Homer's Iliás and Vivaldi's Le quattro stagioni are also world descriptions and cannot be explained by science any more than they can explain each other. Each creation exists and is unique. Each creation has the power to describe an aspect of the world, each creation has the power to make us enter into a new universe. You might agree, but what is my point? My point is that we need to make more room for these windows. Windows on the world. We need to reintroduce art and poetry in science, we need to be more flexible, we need to think about the process instead of the end result. I don't want to think about citations, impact, visibility, trends, appeal, and so on. Researchers should search because they are curious and nothing else. Researchers should be allowed and encouraged to think out of the box, to draw new borders, new lines, new hopes. Let's write papers in alexandrines, let's paint our figures, let's build our own structure for papers. Let's lose some heavy rules to gain some light thoughts. Let's reenchant the rigorous and perverted academic world. Let's put some colors in it. Let's shake things up. Let's go to the lab on Monday in disguise and work on the beach on Tuesday. Why not? Would it be too funny for us, very serious academics?
I am not the first to think about this. These ideas, in a broad way, follow those of recent thinkers such as Bruno Latour, Alexander Groethendick or Aurelien Barrau, and many others.
Finally, I am sending out a message here, a hand, a hope, that might just switch on something in you. An idea, a seed, or a desire, a tree. It was not hard for me; it can be easy for you. Smile to strangers, listen to music you don't usually like, ask for help, because I am asking for yours.

Help me to make the world a better place, we are the first generation to know that we can and must change the world, isn't that exciting?

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