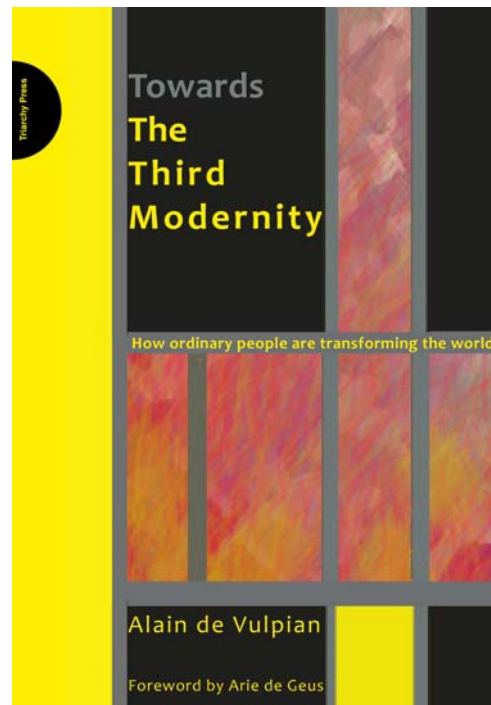


Towards the Third Modernity

How ordinary people are transforming the world

Extracts



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Triarchy Press

Towards the Third Modernity and...

*These are extracts from **Towards the Third Modernity: How Ordinary People are Transforming the World**. There isn't space here to include data and examples, to develop arguments, to quote sources or list further reading. To read more about the full text edition (264 pages) please visit www.triarchypress.com.*

The extracts are taken from the book in chronological order. Most relate to research in Sweden, France and the UK, while some are based on US research. In the book, all the research is fully referenced.

Marketing

In our research for Air France we interviewed Mr X, one of the company's many potential customers who was reluctant to fly not because he was afraid of an accident but because of a general anxiety about what it would be like, how he should behave and so on. Mr Z, however, flew regularly and enjoyed the sense of belonging to the happy elite that took the plane regularly.

In French society at the time [1950s], we saw men like these often enough to be able to discern two distinct social types. Each type shared motivations and a picture of travel and society as a whole that were self-sustaining. The more Mr Z flew, the more his experience of air travel and his sense of belonging to a special elite was reinforced. The more Mr X *did not* fly, the more he felt excluded from that special elite. Air France further reinforced both these positions, giving its passengers champagne and caviar and constantly building an elitist impression of air travel in the way it communicated with customers and potential customers. Furthermore, Air France pilots and cabin crew enjoyed the glamorous lifestyle and enjoyed being seen to be part of this new elite. Apparently, then, the stability and equilibrium of this system was guaranteed by Air France's approach to air travel and to its passengers.

Looking more closely, however, we could also see that this system was not so stable and fixed after all. It was susceptible to change: change that would happen anyway 'naturally' and that would move things in a particular direction. For example, if one day Mr X was forced to go to New York urgently on business and didn't have time to go by sea, then he would fly. He would be charmed and flattered by the experience and would want to repeat it. Thus, Mr Z's type grew in number. And by interviewing Mr X it became clear how this kind of change could be accelerated and what Air France could do to encourage this change.

1968

Cofremca observed and interviewed student rebels and young strikers throughout May and June 1968. We also explored the reactions of their contemporaries in the months

that followed and over the next year, when events were still fresh in people's minds. The press described these young people as highly politicised and revolutionary. We, on the contrary, found them to be angry, but not particularly political and not particularly revolutionary. They had not been indoctrinated, nor had they been especially influenced by political and philosophical books and pamphlets or by ideological thinking. Their protest was something that came from the gut. It emerged from their lived experience, which each tried to explain to us in their own way. They did not like the affluent, consumer society in which they had been raised: to them, it all seemed idiotic and meaningless. They did not want to seize power; rather, many of them told us they 'just wanted to change their lives'. In France, as in the United States and Scandinavia, the urban middle classes often understood and sometimes supported these young radicals.

Consumerism

[By the late 1960s] consumers had grown tired of change for change's sake. They realised that they were not necessarily benefiting from chasing after ever newer and more modern products. The women that we interviewed realised that they were caught in a vicious circle, which wore them out and cost them dear. They did not, however, find themselves in the same position as women a generation before, who had been actively afraid of innovation and had tried to stick to what they knew. They were neither systematically for, nor against, new products. They were alive to the possibility of innovation, but they wanted to see for themselves.

For example, many women who had been on the lookout for more modern kitchen appliances began to realise that they cluttered the kitchen, often broke down and, at the end of the day, made life more complicated, rather than simplifying it. Instead, they preferred robust and multi-purpose kitchen appliances. In the same way, rather than focusing on outward signs of one's modernity, people turned their attention to whether such and such product actually improved their quality of life.

One of the main strands of the First Modernity's chain of mass consumption (desire for modernity → purchase of new products and appliances → economic development and increased innovation → desire for modernity) had been seriously weakened.

The 'me' generation

All the groups who were monitoring socio-cultural change in the 1970s considered the social current we called 'self-expression and self-fulfilment' to be the most widespread, the most obvious and the most likely to bring about change...

...by 1970, for those who led the way, this movement was experienced as a spontaneous eruption. People's attempts to free up their feelings and emotions led to a new

awareness of the richness of their inner worlds: individuals felt themselves to be unique and this came as a wonderful surprise. But it soon also became the norm. General disenchantment with mass consumer society paved the way for a new ideology. And so a new myth and a new norm replaced those of the First Modernity and took on the same role as levers of social change. Westerners seized hold of a few basic beliefs, which came to define the new myth:

- Everybody has their own personality, which makes each of us a unique and precious individual.
- Part of this personality is latent or submerged, it has been repressed and deformed by social conventions and has been manipulated by those in power.
- Everybody has to free their personality from this strait-jacket, to express it in the way they live and to fulfil their true selves.

Narcissism

In the 1970s, the language of pop psychology informed people's search for self-development. They had to satisfy their needs, realise their potential, continue to grow and express their true emotions. They needed to be recognised as 'real' people, with emotional, sexual, material, intellectual, physical and social needs. The more needs one satisfied, the more one fulfilled oneself. Their emotions were somehow sacred and it was a crime not to satisfy an emotional need.

Yankelovich observed that [in the USA] many people spent a great a deal of time weighing up the pros and cons of related life choices. How much should they invest in their marriage, their job or their life, and what should they expect to get out of them? Should they remain faithful or should they seek sexual fulfilment wherever they could find it? How should couples split household chores and responsibilities? How should women divide their energies between their roles as mothers, wives and working women? They not only had to choose, but also to be creative in their choices. Rather than focusing on the world and its vagaries, they turned their attention on themselves. Many analysts began to suggest that American society had entered a phase of acute narcissism.

Conspicuous consumption

In France, Cofremca noticed subtle changes as early as 1967. The first signs of this emerged in a survey we conducted for Renault. We were asked to help with the development of a new model, the Renault 5, which finally appeared in 1972. Our fieldwork suggested that previous trends were being turned on their head. Well-off middle managers, for whom a show of conspicuous consumption had long been a major factor in their choice of car, appeared to be less concerned with this aspect of things than before. Instead, they dreamed of a car in which they felt comfortable, which

would improve their quality of life and which would be practical, not impressive. They wanted a car 'to feel good in', not a car to show off.

In the same year, similar research carried out for construction companies in and around Paris came to much the same conclusion. Well-off middle managers who had, until recently, chosen their apartments on the grounds of prestige and status, were now motivated by other concerns. They wanted a comfortable apartment where their family would live and interact happily. At the same time, people's notions of the ideal home layout began to change. They no longer wanted apartments with clear divisions between the kitchen and the living area, between private and public space. Instead, they looked for flexibility and rooms that gave space for improvisation and easy communication between different members of the family. By 1975, it was clear that changing lifestyles throughout the Western world had severely dented the importance of conspicuous consumption.

1960s fashion

It was the same young women who, in 1965, were saying, 'I love fashion, I always try to be fashionable', that five years later came out with statements like, 'I don't care about fashion, I'm not a mannequin and I'm my own person'. In this short period, people had begun to reject fashion, which they increasingly experienced as a sort of authoritarian imperative. In 1971, Cofremca carried out a survey for a large department store, which allowed us to explore this phenomenon. The store's customers tended to be fairly cutting edge, much smarter than the average city woman. Their clothes' racks were covered in huge signs, with arrows and slogans saying "The latest style!" We interviewed the women who were browsing among the rails and asked them what they thought. Most responded, "Who cares about their styles? I wear whatever takes my fancy". People were so sick of the tyranny of fashion that they often deliberately wore supposedly unfashionable styles or items, or dressed as simply as possible, cultivating a look that said, "I just threw on the first thing that came to hand".

The myth of personality

We have already seen how the myth of discovering one's personality and fulfilling one's potential reinforced people's growing self-awareness throughout the 1970s. But as our interviewees ventured deeper and deeper into their inner worlds, their vision of their personality became less clear-cut. Although people were still searching for self-fulfillment and self-actualisation, the myth of a fixed personality gradually began to break down.

The first signs of this change of direction emerged during our 1976 annual conference in Switzerland. We were all presenting the results of our research over the previous year. Cofremca described a discovery it had made. In the course of our sociological fieldwork among young people, we had come across some whose behaviour showed a marked

contrast with what we had observed in previous years. They were basically saying, 'Self-actualisation is all well and good, but it's a hassle. I've had enough of that. I want to have fun, I want to feel alive.' Cofremca declared that it was intending to study a new socio-cultural current, which [came to be known as] 'full, rich life'.

In the mid-1970s, then, living a full, rich life had become a major motivating factor for many groups of young people. This quest spread throughout the rest of the population over the next twenty years. People were no longer striving to actualise a personality buried deep inside by struggling against authority, norms, constraints and social conventions. Instead, they wanted to live a full life and embrace the gamut of emotions and desires, letting them find their direction in life just by living it. This was a new form of fulfilment.

Empathy and intuition

Life histories analysed during the 1980s and '90s show that many people from the older group (the generation of '68) were also learning to combine emotion and reason. Not only did they savour their physical and emotional experiences, but they were also able to step back from them and analyse and understand them. In so doing, they discovered that other people had emotions and feelings and they became more aware of the feelings provoked by interaction with others. They developed their empathy and interpersonal intuition and they sharpened this empathetic intuition, which acted as a sort of social radar and played a central role in transforming the fabric of society.

The meaning of life

In the 1950s and '60s, people were rarely troubled by the meaning or otherwise of their actions. The thousands of interviews we conducted at the time showed that people always had ready-made explanations to justify their actions. And the explanations that came to mind and that made their actions meaningful often appeared straightforward, obvious and logical. They were rationalisations and justifications borrowed from the dominant intellectual and religious systems of the time. People were satisfied with them because they were uninquisitive and disinclined to make the effort to dig a little deeper. 'Why did I vote Communist? Because I'm working class.' However, if we encouraged them to think about their underlying motivations, then they sometimes realised the meaning of their actions. And perhaps they also realised that they could dig deeper still.

...The people that we observed throughout the 1990s were no longer in the same situation as those we had interviewed thirty or forty years earlier. They no longer looked for meaning outside themselves; instead they looked at their own history and experiences. Culture and society no longer provided them with signposts and guides. The whittling away of traditional forms of knowledge and belief (religions, ideologies

and worldviews) had deprived them of ready-made responses. Without them, they were forced to face up to new and often surprisingly different experiences that they had somehow to explain to themselves. They often felt uncomfortable in this new society and tried to understand their discomfort.

Their new knowledge and skills would serve them well. They had a 'left-brain interpreter' that was far more adept at communicating with other brain modules than anything their predecessors had had. The result was a greater ability to understand the meaningfulness or otherwise of what they did and what happened to them.

Religion

There are two distinct paths that may be followed. On the one hand, there is the 'pick 'n' mix' approach to religion popular in Europe and Canada, where everyone invents their own religious system. And on the other, there is the possibility of choosing (although perhaps not permanently) one's religion off the peg from the wide range available. This is much more common in the United States.

Pick 'n' mix. Wherever they may be, most spiritually inclined people today are not involved in sects, cults or official churches. Though they may not be alone in their search, they are not looking for institutional environments. They are engaged in a personal spiritual quest. They flee from dogmatism and attempts to enlist them in institutions. They borrow here and there and build up a wealth of personal experiences that together constitute a sort of inchoate philosophy. Though they may draw on non-monotheistic oriental wisdoms, they normally refrain from permanently adhering to any particular doctrine. And so, sometimes alone, sometimes with others, and sometimes with the help of one or more guides or gurus, they knock together a sort of vague, individual syncretism.

This in no way shuts them off from other people, each of whom has their own unique blend of practices and experiences and with whom they may be happy at times to engage. This path tends to lead to tolerance and ecumenicalism. Networks are formed, with more or less clearly defined boundaries, but most of the time they are not hermetically sealed. This is less a search for something in particular than the pursuit of a sort of self-development where people can share a sense of complicity that gives them the impression of belonging to a vast, open-ended community of seekers.

Off the peg. In Europe, a small number of our interviewees are clearly involved in sects or cults. In the United States, charismatic cults and sects, which may be hard to distinguish from churches, are widely accepted. They multiply and prosper. Both charismatic Catholics and especially Protestant evangelicals incorporate ecstatic chants and dancing into their services and make widespread use of mainstream marketing

techniques. There is a wide range of different faiths on offer. This is so pronounced that our American colleagues describe large numbers of their citizens as going shopping in religious supermarkets. People who opt for this or that cult or sect take on a ready-made set of beliefs, practices and rituals which they import from outside and in which they seek solace. But they still retain a certain independence because they can always change their minds: there is no social stigma attached to changing faiths.

Informal personal networks

Social networks are not a recent invention. In the 19th century, the bourgeoisie was already based on networking. One's social ties were determined by family histories, by one's education, by one's political, religious and philosophical persuasion and, only recently, by one's profession. They were often closed networks, which it was all but impossible to break into: networks which fought hard to maintain their identity, culture and influence. And, of course, there have long been other networks: the Freemasons, church groups, the Ku Klux Klan, gentlemen's clubs, old boys' networks and many others.

These were very different from the freely chosen, open and flexible networks we see emerging today. During the 1980s and '90s, spontaneous networks sprang up: people developed ties to other people who, in turn, had ties with yet others. This form of networking developed among all social classes, not only among the elites. Most networks were very different in form from their predecessors. They were freely chosen: people selected one another, instead of having their social ties decided by birth, social conventions or their situation in life. They were informal, not institutional. They were self-organised, rather than being instituted or imposed from the outside. Sometimes they were semi-permanent, but just as often they were short-lived and did not necessarily aim to be definitive or even very stable.

We see networks emerge and then disappear. Their boundaries are often vague, porous and potentially overlapping. Each connection contains the possibility of further connections, and so the fabric of networking is gradually woven.

Sex

We saw the early signs of polysensuality and sexual freedom in Sweden and France in the early 1970s. Our observations focused on the extent to which prevailing sexual taboos had been dismantled: tolerance of adolescent sexual relations, of extra-marital affairs and of public references to sexuality. This liberalising trend came to an end in Sweden in the late '70s and in France in 1982 (among 15-18 year-olds) and in 1986 (among the rest of the population). However, we saw the liberalising trend continue in other areas: the acceptance of homosexuality and increased tolerance of practices once considered perverse or transgressive.

During the 1980s and 1990s, however, we witnessed a change of direction. The tide of sexual liberalism, as it related to sexual values and behaviour, gave way to the search for a sensually and emotionally richer sex life. One of the earliest and most striking signs of this transformation was the shift in France from a sexual liberalism in the 1970s centred on emancipation and challenging convention to a sexual liberalism in the 1980s and '90s based on hedonism and polysensuality, on the quest for the sensations, emotions and pleasures that accompany love-making.

According to our interviewees, this enrichment of people's sex lives had four major characteristics. Many men adopted views that had traditionally been considered feminine: sex and sexuality should be accompanied by feelings, intimacy and a sense of connection with one another. Many women had become more 'masculine' in their attitude towards sex: taking the initiative and actively seeking (multiple) male sexual partners. Together, men and women had set out to explore and cultivate the emotions and sensations connected with love and sex. Finally, these emotions and sensations lasted longer as couples prolonged their sex lives into old age, sometimes making use of new medical treatments.

Halos of emotion

In a sea of otherwise half-hearted identification with others, the vast majority of people today like sometimes to be swept up by waves of emotion or surges of compassion that draw them into a short-lived community of sentiment, be it at the level of their city, their country, their continent or the entire planet.

Most of these groupings only last as long as the emotions that inspire them. A particular event acts as a catalyst that unites an entire population. Huge numbers of people suddenly feel an intense emotion and realise that it is widely shared. They are in tune with others and so feel close to them. Together, they form halos, vague and transitory social configurations that can sometimes tightly bind together thousands, millions, tens or even hundreds of millions of people. The waves with which they begin can encompass almost the entire planet, as when the Berlin Wall came down in late 1989, when Princess Diana died in 1997 or during the anti-war demonstrations of 2003. They can be national or local, provoked by oil slicks, by a government's failure to prosecute a paedophile network or by people's outrage at the unexpected success of the far right at elections. These ensembles are often marked by solidarity or political protest, but they can also involve joy, hope or fear.

Technology

The opposite influence (that of technology on the socio-human sphere) is also crucial. As they become part of everyday life, VCRs, PCs, fax-machines, answerphones, mobile

phones, the Internet and Prozac feed into people's personal evolution and promote the development and intensification of their networks and sociosystems. As they use these new tools, men and women discover unsuspected possibilities that reinforce or trigger changes of perspective, often revolutionise their lifestyles and promote transformation in the social fabric. This is true whether or not they have already been profoundly affected by modernising processes. As they use them, they become more autonomous, better connected and their vitality increases.

Research carried out by Sociovision in several European countries in 1998 and 1999 highlighted some of the principal impacts of these new tools. They lessened – even removed – geographic, psychological and social distance within networks and society. Interpersonal communications, family, friendship or business networks, and mafia and terrorist organisations were all able to adapt and self-regulate in real-time and on a global-scale. They allowed people to discover and choose one another on the grounds of psychological affinities, shared tastes or interests and cultural similarities. Insofar as they removed the need for real-world, face-to-face communication, computers and telephones freed people from their inhibitions. They counterbalanced modern phenomena like mobility, migration and unsynchronised life rhythms that might otherwise have broken families and networks apart. They helped people to remain a part of, rather than becoming alienated from, society.

Electronic media seem to favour authentic, even brutal, communication. They solicit less formal and more direct forms of speech. Mobile phones also transformed communication. They allowed for instant communication; people were able to say what they felt the moment they felt it, without intellectualising or brooding on it. Recent surveys show that 'on line' communication (by telephone or Internet) tends to intensify relationships within a micro-system. In many families, it has already become unthinkable for any member not to have a mobile. Even young children of 7 or 8 have one so their parents or older siblings can check up on, advise and reassure them.

Education

The type of education that people try to provide for their offspring is quite particular. It is rather different from the education that they themselves received and radically different from that which their parents received. It is becoming clearer that nowadays the majority of parents seek to 'open their children's minds to dialogue, trust and communication of their deepest feelings', to 'teach them about life', to offer them 'tenderness and affection' and to 'share emotions with them'. In the vast majority of cases, even in the United States, they utterly dismiss 'the rule of authority without explanation'. They also sideline principles in favour of a navigation system that can intuitively adapt itself to situations that are always unique. A constantly increasing proportion of people think that in order to raise a young child well, it is more

important to have physical contact, games and cuddles, than to explain to them how to behave. This type of family, even when it is fragmented or hard to define, is a loving family.

Young people

Most young people who turned twenty towards the end of the 20th century seem to have emerged from their education with three dominant traits that will mark their generation. These traits will help them make their way in society, will reinforce the modernity of society and will probably shake it up and speed up its transformation.

The importance of warm, affectionate relationships. Their emotions, encouraged and constantly stimulated from early childhood onwards, are intense and central to their lives. They look for this intensity and take pleasure in cultivating their emotions. The exchange of authentic emotions with others who are capable of sharing them is essential for them. They are highly aware of the importance of intimacy. Though they are capable of aggression, violence and even hatred, they are primarily focused on the search for warm, affectionate relationships, for authentic emotional dialogue and for the little pleasures that bring happiness.

Their social radar and their ability to navigate social situations are even better than those of their parents. Early on in life, they established an ongoing emotional dialogue with their parents and then their friends. They also had to deal with sensitive life problems in an uncertain and open-ended social environment and this forced them to adapt and to improvise. They grew up in a social micro-fabric of family and friends that was affectionate, heterarchical, tolerant, flexible, lacking in clearly-defined boundaries and where nothing was completely guaranteed or taken for granted. For the most part, this was a stimulating environment where they developed the capacity to empathise with, and to anticipate, others, where they acquired a therapeutic and strategic sensibility, where they trained themselves to foil attempts by others to assert authority over them and to recognise when it was acceptable for people to assume transient leadership roles, and finally where they learnt to take the initiative and to take the lead themselves.

Their relationship to society and to the prevailing system is unclear. Most of them feel comfortable in the micro-society of household and friends in which they live. They are viscerally attached to it. But they feel themselves to be somehow outsiders in the world of institutions and organisations. They vote less than their elders and distance themselves from political parties and they have no particular desire to work for large companies or for the state. They have little time for political or economic leaders, whom they often despise. Instead they tend to fall back upon their own little world and there

they try to create a comfortable life for themselves. However, if circumstances seemed favourable, they can equally become involved in subversive movements.

Big business

Companies became estranged from their workforces. As big business became seen as more and more morally reprehensible, so people began to challenge or reject it. These companies lost their capacity to navigate wisely and, in some cases, their very survival was threatened.

By the end of the 1990s, we and our fellow socio-cultural observers across the modern world noticed an increase in work-related stress and frustrations, often linked to the management practices of large companies and the public sector. More and more people felt unreasonably constrained and that their work was meaningless. They also began to behave in ways that were potentially harmful for business. They banded together to look out for one another and to work as little as possible, and resisted any attempts by management to change the way things worked. Alongside this, we witnessed a brain drain (of both young and established employees) away from big business and the public sector, and people dreamed of early retirement and 'finding themselves a more interesting job'.

A growing majority of employees thought that their best interests conflicted with those of their employer. This feeling spread to middle managers and even senior management. A dangerous gulf was beginning to emerge between shareholders and boards of directors, on the one hand, and the living company, on the other. This gap was reflected in opinion polls.

While public perception of big business worsened, people remained positive about smaller companies. This moral condemnation was evident in all of the most modern countries, but was particularly pronounced in the United States and least damning in Germany. In all Western countries, more than half, and sometimes even three-quarters, of people thought that big business did not serve the public interest.

Digital democracy

A new **digital democracy** is also beginning to emerge. New communication technologies have led to the proliferation of sociosystems and to the increasing power of civil society. The spread of the Internet and of mobile phones goes hand in hand with people's desire for dialogue and participation. Citizens who share common concerns can now gather online and engage in debate. People share and develop ideas in online forums. Different networks identify one another, assess each other and sometimes form alliances.

It is now vastly easier for groups to mobilise their members and engage in action. Technology favours the creation of virtual civic communities that use petitions and manifestos to launch real campaigns. Digital networks bypass traditional political channels and influence the authorities. In a crisis, these networks make protestors much more efficient. In France, for example, the student demonstrations of 1995 owed much to the use of websites. The Indonesian revolution in spring 1998 was the first revolution where the Internet played an important part and was, without doubt, one of the elements that contributed to President Suharto's rapid downfall. Overall, the Internet will very likely help to catalyse the development of a new type of citizen and the self-organisation of new forms of citizenship, helping to combine the humanism of the Left and the economic vitality of the Right.

A bleak future

At this point in the early 21st century, most modern societies – and, in fact, the world as a whole – lack good governance. The situation looks bleak. Frustrated and marginalised sections of the population are turning into closed and aggressive communities. Even in the most democratic countries, the political superstructure is cut off from people and living society. It is poorly regulated and widely mistrusted. Those people who challenge the system are becoming more radical. The commercial economy is also still artificially cut off from the rest of society and from the environment. It lacks both internal and external regulation, wastes enormous amounts of creativity and energy, excludes some people and ravages the biosphere.

Mounting violence pits people, 'isolates' and ethnic and faith communities against one another. States take part in this crescendo of violence. The United States, in particular, wages war on terrorism whilst reinforcing the very processes that give rise to it. Those in power short-sightedly turn Modernites against the ruling elite, and the Third World against the First. The major threats to our planet go ignored and the global process of modernisation goes unmanaged. This leads to increasing inequality and increasingly intractable problems. In the end, the result could be destructive hostility.

A better future

... In other scenarios, the modernising process realises its humanistic potential. Civic entrepreneurs become more active and more audacious. Inspired leaders manage to catalyse transformative energy. Traditionally monolithic and authoritarian companies engage in a modernist learning process. In most countries, the authorities loosen their bureaucratic regulation, develop policies that allow most people to find happiness and fulfilment, and talk on an equal footing with other stakeholders, like public authorities, companies and civil society. The result, at different levels, would be a balanced and wiser form of social governance. The modernising process would flourish in the West and affect the rest of the planet. The Third Modernity would lead us towards

humanistic and tolerant societies that were also peaceful and ordered. They would be well equipped to face the threats that hang over us in the 21st century.

Human history in 300 words

For over 50,000 years, our hunter-gatherer ancestors simultaneously improved their chances of survival and populated the earth by learning to cooperate with one another and to live in harmony with nature. Their successors, first farmers and pastoralists then merchants and industrialists, began to appropriate, exploit and subjugate nature, all the while laying the emphasis on competition. Perhaps we are at the dawn of a new entente between the human race and nature, unless we are forced to taste its vengeful wrath.

Empathy flourished in these small bands of hunter-gatherers whose members all knew, and were able to adapt to, one another. They probably lived a life characterised by informality, spontaneity and heterarchy. Then the invention, 12,000 years ago, of agriculture and pastoralism increased the size and complexity of these collectives. In a few thousand years, we invented hierarchical organisations that became increasingly large, structured and stratified, and that allowed us to simplify complexity in the process. However, an explosion of complexity in the 20th century outweighed the capacity of hierarchy to simplify things. Now a new form of regulation and governance is emerging from the transformation that individuals and society are undergoing and from the revolution in communication technology, which puts everything instantly in touch with everything else and promotes complexity, self-organisation and self-regulation.

Among the hunter-gatherers, as in the most advanced 21st century societies, power is dispersed. It resides with ordinary people and those who know how to influence them. Leaders and innovators working in cooperation or competition will make use of advances in nanotechnology, molecular and cellular biology, neuroscience and social sciences and technologies, which open up enormous opportunities for us to navigate matter, energy, life and society with a steady and wiser hand.