

# Manifesto for a Humane Economics

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Never has our capacity to produce wealth been so great and never has our incapacity to make that prosperity serve the improved well-being of all people been so flagrant. What is worse, the coexistence of productive efficiency and human wastage is not just a regrettable coincidence. On the contrary, it seems to evince a complex but undeniable logical link between the prodigious development of the commercial sphere and harsher working conditions, a bleaker outlook for the underprivileged, and suicidal negligence where preserving an environment fit to live in is concerned. This is assuredly not the first instance in history of such a mismatch between reality and human aspirations. But it is perhaps the first such instance at a time when a universal economic and political model is being propagated worldwide. An increasing fraction of humankind may indeed imagine itself to be living in the best of economic systems — the capitalist market economy — and in the best of political systems — representative democracy. If the best that can emerge from at least two thousand five hundred years of political and economic thinking produces the worst for the lives of a daunting proportion of humankind, then that dashes the hopes born of the age of Enlightenment: for the advancement of human reason ceases to advance humanity. And if reason is in this measure unreasonable, in the face of absurdity, then men and women have no further refuge but in dejection or revolt. Hence, over and above the sufferings caused by the present forms of economic development, it is the carefully nurtured belief in the lack of any other conceivable forms that is utterly inhuman.

We maintain that such a belief springs both from ignorance and from a skilfully ordered lie passing off the political victory of modern neoliberalism as an intellectual and scientific victory. But the ignorance and the lie are spreading because of the inability of intellectuals and scientists to communicate effectively with their fellow citizens. The fact is that the present form of political and economic institutions in no way constitutes an ideal form founded upon the most authentic outcomes of political science and economics. The real-world "democracies" in which we live are quite simply not true democracies since they often lead, at variance with the democratic ideal, to a concentration of powers and greater inequality. Likewise economics, far from having established the theoretical superiority of a deregulated market economy, has identified all the reasons enabling us to explain and decry the natural propensity of such an economy to lead humankind into an environmental and social impasse. Where public opinion has reason to believe in the existence of a virtually one-track economic thinking — with full scientific backing for the necessary submission of people to market laws alone — the reality of economic thinking is nevertheless quite different. That reality simply requires, in order to come to the fore and into the limelight of public debate, that all those whose thinking on the economy differs, which in particular means a large proportion of

economists, actually take the floor as it were. It is to such a collective voicing of views that we hope hereby to contribute.

## Unrest in the market civilization

There are many reasons for the public in general to see today's economy as inhuman. Material, health and cultural deprivation is no longer the standard fare of the poor countries, but is now spreading to the world's richest countries. The scramble for growth, without sufficient regard for the environment and the sustainability of intensive exploitation of non-renewable resources, is a direct threat to the future quality of life of our children, if not indeed to the very survival of the future generations. In day-to-day matters the overriding demand that businesses must be competitive often elbows aside the requirements of human dignity. A great many of those in paid employment have the impression that they are reduced to the state of "resources", described as human for the form but in reality exploitable to the hilt just like any other material factor. The technological and material advances of humankind are ever more unequally distributed and seem to stimulate selfishness rather than the solidarity of nations.

The dominant political outlook, that of many international institutions (OECD, IMF, World Bank) and of many economists relayed and amplified by the media, has in the past twenty years increased the unease of public opinion by lending credence to the idea that the visible evils of the development of market economies are unavoidable costs imposed by "economic laws" (which laws people cannot and must not oppose), temporary costs of "transition" to an ideal worldwide market economy. But, for one thing, the "temporary" comes to stay and, since each of us has but one all too short life, there is scant consolation to be had in belonging until its end to the generation sacrificed in the quest for an ideal model which, incidentally, holds out no sure promise of a better life for the future generation. For, what is more, by way of an ideal, the only coherent model that seems to be offered for the future is that of a society of free markets solely based upon individual initiative and responsibility, a society limiting the production of public goods (security, environment, justice, peaceful labour relations, etc.), a society in which values are reduced to market values, where the relationship with others consists not in accompanying them in a common endeavour but in being more competitive than them and so jockeying for a more enviable position.

Apart from a privileged or unthinking few, nobody dreams of being among the temporary survivors of an endless competition; nobody dreams of living in a world where the survivors of this competition must as of now barricade themselves in to ward off the wrath of the losers. If the notion of human progress is to have any meaning, does it not indeed presuppose replacing survival by life, conflict by peace, and rivalry by social harmony and solidarity? Yet the idea that economic progress is also a source of that universally desired social progress is an idea in its grave for the foot soldiers of the new economic war in which History has enlisted enrolled them willy-nilly.

Not only does the actual economy, the perceptible economy, seem to citizens particularly inhuman, but the theoretical economy, the "economic science", as it is now perceived by the uninitiated, is equally inhuman. The platitudes put out by the media have persuaded public opinion that the vast majority of economists adhere to the so-called neoliberal credo and lend intellectual endorsement to one and the same world model, a model of which many are indeed ever more fearful, both for themselves and for their descendants. The economists and their "science" appear in turn to be indifferent to human suffering, mesmerized by the sole virtues of immediate market profit and incapable of proposing any ways of achieving a just and sustainable form of human development. There is no smoke without fire; the commonplaces of the media are not always absent

from the sites where economic science is commonly taught. So petitions by students sometimes perform the useful roledo the useful job of stressing that a monolithic neoliberal outlook and a "science" quite divorced from real-world situations are indeed propagated in some universities.

Civil society would thus have many a reason to thinkample reason to suppose that the economy and its experts can do nothing for it, and to be driven to desperation by political leaders who often confirm their resignation or powerlessness in the face of inhuman market laws. Civil society would then have little other recourse than revolt pure and simple against the economy. Hence we have seen the development of an anti-economic, anti-globalization thinking which, while demonstrating a salutary capacity on the part of citizens to rally against a world they refuse, does not yet come up with another credible and viable model. For a model humane economy cannot be rebuilt on the foundations of a mere litany of refusals and a systematic rejection of the indisputable merits of an economy of free markets. Revolt does not constitute a doctrine but can, on the other hand, be manipulated by all doctrines. History teaches us that the despair and disgust of peoples also prepares a feather bed for all forms of extremism. What is singularly lacking then in this awakening of civil society *against* the evils of the "market is all" attitude is another model *for* which it could mobilize itself effectively. Most fortunately, however, a large portion of civil society is already fully aware of the limits of a purely protest movement and, last January, the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre clearly redirected the international social movement towards a quest for constructive proposals. However, although many economists take an active part in this movement, that does nothing to fill the vacuum left by the absence of any collective communication of economists as economists. This collective silence limits the credibility of cases of individual commitment, whose detractors have no compunctions about sidelining as instances of minority "heterodoxy" or even "bad" economists, or yet again "unscientific" economists. So long as the so-calledsupposedly dominant thinking has not been in turn been relativized and sidelined by a collective approach from the community of economists, the international social movement will be a butt for caricaturizing as a war of Utopian citizens against the findings of economic science. Also, as long as the actually dominant thinking has not come out into the open, contemporary economics will continue to be caricatured and demonized as a neoliberal monster by the upholders of an anti-economic outlook who find in it an easy way of drumming up support.

Thus the inability of economists collectively and massively to affirm the possibility of devising another model contributes to pushing some of our fellow citizens and many of our elected representatives further still into a sterile opposition between the political and the economic spheres. Yet we ourselves know that the economy *is* political and that the requirement is to reintegrate, and not oppose, the economy and democracy. We affirm: that the only legitimate purpose of economic development is the equitable satisfaction of human needs; that the only social utility of the famous "economic laws" springs from the fact that they can be made to serve human laws; that a free market without political regulation is chaos; that a great many entrepreneurs are moreover calling for healthy competition and not an economic war that is ruthless towards the weakest; that justice and social harmony are economically effectivemake economic sense. We think that economics can help human beings to choose rather than submit to their lot. But we have not yet been able to put over this message to our fellow citizens, who are still convinced of the pre-eminence of just one form of economic thinking, which circulates conflicting messages, and which affirms, as stated for example by Edouard Michelin, that "politics must be made to serve the economy". The unease of society also reflects a shortcoming in the communication of economists, which itself points to unease in economic science.

## Unease in economic science

To put things too schematically but conveniently, it is true that part of the economic theory developed since the end of the late nineteenth century (under the "neoclassical" label, which in its broad sense can take in "monetarism" and the "new classical macroeconomics") rests upon an extremely simplistic view of human behaviour and serves as a central theoretical reference for a neoliberal, or even ultraliberal, ideology hardly admitting of any other laws than market laws. But we denounce the specious bracketing together of mathematical economics, or neoclassical models, and ultraliberalism.

There is indeed a need to dissociate the indisputable benefits/inputs and the disputable ideology deriving from the neoclassical models. First of all, the true results of the most orthodox economic science provide no justifiable basis for an ultraliberal ideology; they can equally well serve as the basis of, for example, social democratic policies, the quest for sustainable development, ecological policies, and so on. True, neoclassical economics originally sought to show that a set of free and perfectly competitive markets led to optimum resource use and so constituted a model not to be bettered, a benefit in itself. But any economist worthy of the name knows that this bid is a complete failure and that the essential contribution of research on this matter is, on the contrary, the fact of having gradually established the whole array of reasons why perfectly free markets are incapable of leading to a social optimum (imperfect information, uncertainty, public property, external factors, etc.). Thus orthodox political economy, far from having scientifically justified the submission of nations to market laws, has demonstrated the need for political choices and put established the primacy of politics over economics.

We likewise denounce the bracketing together of liberalism and ultraliberalism. We have all been bequeathed a liberal political tradition that aspires to the advancement of personal freedom and to the advent of societies truly founded upon the free adherence of their members. But there is an ultraliberal political persuasion tending to overlook the demands of social justice and the legitimacy of political regulations that free citizens draw up in order better to live together, a minority deviant trend of liberal philosophy now promoting a strictly individualistic and commercial vision of human progress. It is fitting to distinguish carefully between that deviant ultraliberal trend and the main body of liberalism. Hence, while being aware of the simplistic nature of any label but also of the need to name things for communication purposes, we describe this deviancy as neoliberal.

But if neoliberal ideology is devoid of scientific and philosophical foundations, to what can we ascribe its undeniable hold over minds and policies? There is first of all a set of objective factors — whose precise examination/scrutiny would be out of place here — which have modified the economic and political power relations in favour of the holders of capital and, more broadly, those with a stake in an extensive liberalization of markets:

- technological changes that have made production less dependent on unskilled labour;
- unemployment and/or mass poverty upsetting the balance of power between employers and employees to the detriment of the latter;
- liberalization of capital flows and rigorous/strict monetary policies which, by favouring/promoting funding by financial markets, have redistributed/shifted managerial power for the benefit of into the hands of the major shareholders;
- disappearance of the internal and external political threat represented by the existence of a bloc of communist countries;
- a political pendulum movement in favour of the liberal right wing in the late 1970s and early 1980s, etc.

Beside these objective elements, however, there is no lack of subjective factors. For, to be dominant, a model does not have to be exact; it suffices that enough key players believe in it. In a universe marked by mounting uncertainty there is a growing need for jointly held beliefs able to guide action. And when a belief begins to implant itself in any human community (a commercial enterprise, a money market, a party, a government), whoever does not share that belief runs a

definite risk of marginalization and poor counter-performance. An operator on a money market cares not a jot whether the beliefs of the market are right or wrong; all that is needed is to identify those beliefs correctly and stick to them so as not to bet on a rising stock when everyone else is gambling on its fall. A government that manages to secure a stable exchange rate, provided it convinces the markets of its adherence to a certain neoliberal credo, will ultimately display neoliberal values possibly at odds with the platform on which it was elected. When a candidate in a competition for the recruitment of senior officials expects to come before a panel sharing the neoliberal belief, he or she has to display that belief instead of genuinely sincerely addressing the questions put. A situation is thus established in which individual rationality dictates a quest not for the truth but for conformity. This provides fertile ground indeed for a handful of manipulators skilfully practising intellectual terrorism and the intimidation of refractory elements. This is what we would call "the *politburo* effect": if you are alone in voicing the criticisms harboured by everyone else in the *politburo*, you end up in the gulag!

The force of what some call the prevailing orthodoxy or "one-idea" system has not been to be unique — or even perhaps in fact prevalent — but to impose itself as what just about everyone believed to be the economically correct approach of at the time, an approach from which it was consequently hazardous to stray. The weakness of the other lines of economic thinking has no doubt been that of doing nothing to form an alternative belief, and supposing that, by just working away on the quest for truth in isolation, they could be of real social utility. There is indeed no shortage of economic approaches not sharing rejecting the belief that any problem can ultimately be solved by means of a general equilibrium of free markets. But their concern to constitute an alternative "school" of thought is also liable, paradoxically, to detract from the visibility and actual impact of alternative approaches. For one thing, the sectarianism of a portion of neoliberal economists is at least matched by that affecting some of their detractors. Since the best means of highlighting one's difference is to caricaturize the positions of the other side to excess, scientific debate sometimes gives way to a dialogue of the deaf made up of recriminations that may on occasion be cordial but are always sterile. Furthermore, the heterodox schools have helped to make the neoliberal model more central by constituting themselves and communicating versus that model. The insistence of one and all on their criticism of criticizing the same neoclassical reference gives the latter a dominant place which might well end up becoming inflated beyond its real influence. In an infinite crowd the centre is always just the direction in which all looks converge everyone is looking, even if the centre is completely empty! Another point is that the heterodox schools have not been able, or have not wanted, to put forward what they have in common to counter what represents the real strength of the neoclassical paradigm, namely the combination of a common scientific and ideological project (to demonstrate the superiority of a free-market economy of free markets) and a common method (the mathematical modelling of individual behaviour patterns of optimization under constraint). What the other approaches have yet to do therefore need is to unite, like the neoliberal paradigm, around a project and a method.

We indeed think that most economists, worldwide, do not share the neoliberal ideology nevertheless still presented by the media as the dominant economic thinking. This silent majority is made up of economists of a great many allegiances but what they all desire is an economy effectively regulated to guarantee sustainable development for the benefit of all. Yet public opinion sees them as very much in a minority (if indeed it sees them as existing at all); with the result that the public acquires a general feeling of hostility towards the economy/economics and is thus at the mercy of all the manipulators able to exploit revolt and distress. Even the political leaders most given to intervention often seem unaware that they have the backing of the modern economic analysis; on the contrary, they seem convinced that any burst of political purposefulness/voluntarism is sure to be castigated by an economic science allergic to the slightest instance of State intervention. A single, out-of-date economic thinking is thus liable to exert dominance, not because it really is dominant but because it fills the vacuum left by the community of economists. The latter

has in fact left it to the media and to political rhetoric to say what the economic thinking is and what the findings of economic analysis are. In a world in which the media information plays an essential part in shaping public opinion, economists have shown too little concern about taken too little interest in the image and stereotypes that the media help to popularize about their discipline.

It may also well be that the majority most of the world's entrepreneurs do not share the neoliberal ideology either. For one should not deduce what the real desires of entrepreneurs are from mere observation of behaviour patterns that are largely imposed by the logic of economic warfare tending to govern their markets. Let us first recall that the vast majority of enterprises are micro-enterprises (individual or with a handful of employees) and SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) whose owners have concerns and constraints light years from those of the bosses of multinationals. Employees themselves, when they remain in contact with their employer, could attest that the head of an enterprise cannot be equated to the caricature of the capitalist greedy for personal gain, indifferent to the ills of the world and with a gut hostility to state intervention. For its originator or leaders, the enterprise is often also the enterprise or undertaking of a lifetime, an action in which the quest for meaning and recognition coexists with the quest for profit, the latter constituting more a tool than an end in itself. And the entrepreneur is not just an entrepreneur but also a father or mother, a citizen, a person motivated by much besides financial profit. But the competition exacerbated by the general liberalization of trade, when not accompanied by common rules defining the limits of acceptable competition, may force entrepreneurs to behave *as though* profit were the be all and end all of their activity. When the survival of the enterprise is at stake, when the work accomplished in conjunction with the employees has to be defended and when the jobs that can be saved must be preserved, the head of an enterprise may be up against insoluble conflicts of goals. For the individual player does not change the rules of the game by refusing to apply them. Hence a great many entrepreneurs, far from expecting of economists the spreading of liberal dogmas and, of political leaders, the abolition of public restrictions, in reality hope for just the opposite. Of economists they expect reflection on how to devise an economic system that would make square the virtues of healthy competition compatible with the requirements of human development. Of politicians they expect a capacity to have the new rules of the game respected by all the players in their markets.

But in a context seemingly pointing to the domination of a neoliberal ideology among economists and to the inertia of politicians or their inability to impose international standards, entrepreneurs have no option but to come to terms with the world economic war and try to survive, without selling out too much on their own moral standards. Some, but they are albeit a minority, nevertheless seek to muster collective support to promote a new business ethic. This approach as yet has a hard time trying to be getting seen by public opinion as anything other than wishful thinking. It may even be looked on with a degree of misgiving since, enterprises being supposed on the face of it assumed to be interested only in making a profit, everything that appears to depart from the imperative of profitability is suspected of hiding a ruse to lull the vigilance of citizens. And when the approach looks sincere it is most likely to be greeted with the condescending sympathy reserved for noble sentiments beaten bludgeoned from the outset by harsh economic realities. This is because it is heterodox and alien to the "laws of economics" and the *doxa* of the universities. Here again, the failure to communicate of those who let themselves be marginalized as "heterodox" is flagrant.

It is this failure that urgently needs making good. And the responsibility for this lies primarily with the economists; they have ample means of communicating and are not subject to the same limitations as the entrepreneurs. Economists too often make do with moaning about the incompetence of journalists and the manipulation of politicians rather than going to the trouble of putting their results into a form that is relevant and accessible to their fellow citizens. And those who make this effort have not yet sufficiently understood that a thousand stones thrown on the already cluttered waste ground of public debate do not make a visible house that it might occur to

the public to enter. The strength of the neoliberal model is not the number of books and speeches produced in its favour (a brief survey of bookshops and sales figures shows, on the contrary, that anti-liberalism is much more present and sells better). Its strength in the first place is the extreme visibility ensured by its simplicity, its consistency, its uniform approach and the fact that its theoretical logic tallies with the logic now operating in an economy dominated by free competition. The neoliberal house is clearly visible with no mystery about it, right in the middle of the social field. What is still lacking is for the stones and scattered shedshuts around the house to become unified and transform the waste ground into a structured neighbourhood offering citizens comprehensible and credible alternatives.

## Another unifying vision: a "humane economics"

We must therefore communicate with the general public. But communicate what? What seems urgent is simply to dissipate the ignorance of the public on the real state of economic thinking and to make known the existence and indeed prevalence of a humane vision of economics and economy, a vision *for* which associations, voters and elected representatives could rally round. The requirement is to define the features basically linking up the main alternatives to outright laissez-faire. In a communication society, it is also a matter of placing that approach beneath a symbolic banner making it easier to identify and promote, a forceful and unifying concept immediately meaningful for the public at large and suggestive of a clear and attractive goal. I suggest that the concept be that of a *humane economics*. By that we mean neither a "model" nor a "system" but an inspiration and a shared inspiration and aspirations. More precisely, by "humane economics" what we are seeking to express is (1) support for a goal, (2) a choice of methods and (3) an awareness on the part of researchers of their responsibility towards society.

### *1. A humanistic goal*

The only legitimate goal of an economic system is the quality of life of men and women, and that of the underprivileged for a start. By "quality of life" we are to understand the equitable satisfaction of human *aspirations*, not just those provided by market consumption but also the range of aspirations escaping any monetary evaluation. These include such matters as dignity, peace, security, freedom, education, health, recreation, a quality environment and the well-being of future generations. It follows that the criterion of efficiency, dear to economists, must be taken in its broadest sense, which presupposes making the means consistent with all the goals of the system. In this perspective, the frequent distinction between what is said to be the purely technical question of efficient resource use and the supposedly political matter of equitable distribution is disputable. A fully efficient economic system is not just one that guarantees the absence of wasted resources in the production of goods, but also one that best satisfies all the demands of humankind, with justice to the fore. Justice and human dignity are consequently not considerations independent of those relating to efficient resource use; on the contrary, they are among the essential and indissociable criteria of the overall efficiency of an economic system.

### *2. A choice of methods*

As corollaries of this goal, the methods of a humane economics are bound to diverge from the economic "scientism". The humane economics is that of a *complete human being* (of whom the individual maximizing who maximizes market values under constraint is but a caricature), of a human being acting within time (and hence history), on a territory and in a family, social, cultural and political environment; the economy of a person driven by values and not resolving everything by means of calculation or exchange, but also through habit, talent, cooperation, moral rules, social conventions, law, political institutions, and so on.

A humane form of economics is therefore a historical, political, social and ecological economics. It does not disdain the use of mathematics as a language often useful for rigorous reasoning, but it will not let itself be restricted to cases in which that language is possible. Instead of turning a blind eye to the complexity of human societies (which cannot always be set to equations), humane economics endeavours to maintain a rigorous approach that accommodates complexity; it prefers relevance to formalization, it lays claim to the status of a true "social" science (*not to say a "humane" science*) among other social sciences, and it spurns the sterile pretension of enouncing laying down "laws of nature" after the manner of the physical sciences.

### *3. The responsibility of the researcher towards society*

We chose to devote part of our life to research because we hoped to be useful to society. Our work cannot therefore be confined to producing theories and models for intellectual satisfaction alone, or to win the recognition of our peers. Our activity only makes sense if it helps to develop the information and tools actually available to our fellow citizens so that they can take part in the public debate and influence collective choices. Our work consequently does not stop at the gates of our universities and laboratories; it is not over so long as we have not taken charge of circulating it in a form and by means making it accessible to as wide a public as possible. A science in the service of humankind has a duty to communicate with the men and women of its time. Now any genuine communication is a two-way matter. The point for us is not just to inform society of the real state of economic thinking, but also to be in turn informed about the state of society and about local initiatives and social innovations developed by our fellow citizens and the various social movements.

Beyond an essential community of views on the goal and methods of economics, which is of particular interest to the scientific community, it is therefore appropriate to communicate in the direction of society as a whole; we have to define the message we intend to pass on to our fellow citizens. This requires a *Charter for a Humane Economics* that specifies our reference values and our conception of the economy, explicitly denounces the lies and evils of the neoliberal ideology, shows why that supposedly dominant thinking clashes with some of the true results of economic analysis, and affirms and makes clear the need for and possibility of another political regulation of the economy.

### *4. Scope and limits of our initiative*

We must from the outset point to the pitfalls this approach inevitably faces. In the first place, the necessary spelling out of fundamental common values is liable to look like a general invoking of universally recognized principles not amounting to an alternative thinking. On the other hand, however, to avoid a limp consensus on general ideas, we also run the risk of sooner or later getting involved in technical debates on the practical forms of a humane economy and so making us unable



to put out a unifying message. The difficulty is therefore to find not the smallest common denominator but the largest and most meaningful for our fellow citizens.

It is nevertheless also necessary to avoid overestimating this difficulty and, at least, to gauge it in the light of our objective. We are not concerned here with constructing "the" alternative economic model or "the" synthesis of so-called "heterodox" ideas. By "humane economics" we are not designating a model, but only a common inspiration resting upon the three requirements stated above. This common inspiration is compatible with a host of differences as to what institutions and policies are desirable. Our objective is simply to communicate with the public as a whole and with political leaders in order forcefully to affirm that there is not just one model or , just one ideology in economics, and that in any case at all events we reject those making any such hegemonic claim. What we mean is that the work of economists does not consist mainly in preaching the virtues of competition, of maximum profit, of flexibility and of the adaptation of people to market laws; their work is just as much concerned with regulation, ethics, environment, institutions, poverty reduction, sustainable development, and so on. In short, we want to contribute to public debate by making known alternative tenets, and to demonstrate the vigour and real place occupied by such ideas in contemporary economic research. What is more, we refuse to leave it to the media to surmise and to say what economics is about. We take the floor to affirm that economic research today is *also* (and soon *chiefly*) the quest for a viable and humane world respectful of all the values to which human beings are attached, and not just market values.

Once the Charter for a Humane Economics has circulated from country to country and gathered the amendments and assent of hundreds, of indeed thousands of researchers, academics and entrepreneurs, once the existence of this international community has been publicized, the possibility of another belief will have been mooted. It is not may not amount to much but it is still enough to change the nature of public debate. No longer will anyone be able to get away with drumming up , without drawing smiles, to evoke the "laws of economics" to justify resignation, laissez-faire or political inertia.

## TracksPointers for a charter for a humane economics

Far be it from us the pretension to set out here what such a charter should contain. It can only emerge from a collective process of reflection and exchange that we hope to set rolling in motion. At the most, we shall attempt here to mention trackpointers that may stir prompt criticism and reflection and to convince persuade all those seeing the utility of it to make their own contribution in turn. who believe that they too have a useful contribution to make. We set out these trackpointers under four non-exhaustive headings with a general-audience slant. So we ask the reader to take this text solely for what it is: an invitation to engage in exchange and critical discussion presented in terms that the author himself is never sure are the most suitable. We are not here seeking the exact formulation *ipsissima verba* of a new economic doctrine, *doxa*, but rather values and a common inspiration that might hold the attention of all those not conversant with economics and help to extend the scope of public debate. We are not asking for any form of indulgence, but just the minimum of intelligence that consists in not calling a worldwide assembly for each term or comma out of place. The challenge is both simpler and more serious than those of our customary academic debates. We are seeking to identify a common approach that we would be willing to uphold publicly. This results in a form of words limiting the reasoning that would be necessary, but tedious, to avoid any approximation or ambiguity. Furthermore, we shall never achieve a perfectly consensual formulation. Whoever agrees in essence with the approach proposed here, and believes

in the value of publicizing it extensively, must be prepared to uphold it without being absolutely in agreement with every facet of all the proposals and their wording. Such public support places no restraints, by the way, on the wealth and even bitterness of debate within the research community.

## *1. The end purposes of a humane economics*

### *1.1 The economy in the service of humankind*

The economy must serve human beings and not the reverse. It follows that productive efficiency, competitiveness and profitability are not end purposes of the economy but mere instruments remaining conditional upon respect for the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These fundamental rights give rise to economic and social rights specified below, along the lines of what has been attempted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in spelling out human development criteria.

### *1.2 The satisfaction of basic needs*

Every human being has an equal and imprescriptible right to decent material living conditions (adequate food, access to drinking clean water, hygiene, housing, physical security), to education and to healthcare. In a world in which two-thirds of humankind has no regular access to these basic benefits, it is clear that not all human needs can be regarded as enjoying equal priority. Renewal of the mobile telephones of Europeans, for example, is less urgent than making AIDS treatments available in Africa. Yet market logic naturally tends to turn available resources to the satisfaction of solvent needs alone and permanently to stimulate demand for new goods and services likely to generate promising monetary profits. Without any political arbitration and will, unrestricted operation of the market may thus divert a growing share of world resources towards satisfaction of needs that are the most worthwhile in monetary terms and the least urgent from the standpoint of human development and justice. The basic needs of humankind and the scale of public action priorities to meet them can therefore only be determined through public debate and democratic choices.

### *1.3 The conditions of life in society*

The human being, a social being, does not live only on goods and services alone but also on the quality of the relations he or she maintains with others. Every human being is therefore entitled, without prejudice to the above-mentioned rights, to enjoy the necessary leisure time for full development of his or her family relations and other social activities.

Every human being has the right to access to the modes of participation in social living that are necessary to self-respect and dignity. Self-respect and dignity are engendered not just by the recognition of rights but also by the possibility of discharging duties towards society. That This presupposes access to work, to a socially useful activity and to a position involving obligations associated with full citizenship, such as paying taxes. It follows that society cannot regard itself as clear of its supportive responsibility towards its least privileged members, if only because it goes no further than guaranteeing means of subsistence and rights for them regardless of their contribution to society.

### *1.4 Human progress*

Progress is not measured solely in terms of the quantity of goods and services produced and accumulated. Growth is not an end in itself but a tool whose use is conditional upon pursuit of the values of a humane economy. A humane economy is aimed at human progress defined as development of the capacities offered men and women for making private and collective choices in keeping with their aspirations. From this point of view, the idea of an end to history on a single

development model would constitute a backward step and not an advance of economics. The true progress of economics is, on the contrary, gauged in terms of its capacity to extend the opportunities offered people of choosing their lives and the means offered nations of controlling their collective destiny.

### ***1.5 Justice and inequalities***

Inequalities in talent and ability are inevitable. A degree of inequality in the distribution of income and wealth is necessary to convey the feelingan awareness of a just rewards for personal effort and so promote productive efficiency, which in turn developsfurthers the means of achieving a juster society. There are, however, acceptable inequalities and unacceptable inequalities. No consensus has been reached on a precise list of the latter, and besides there cannot be any consensus here. On the other hand, it can be considered that a virtual quasi-consensus iscan be considered possible around a number of principles.

We maintain that, in a just society, all human beings should enjoy an equal capacity to conduct their lives in accordance with their conceptions, while respecting that same capacity for their fellows. This ideal entails not only formal equality of fundamental freedoms and rights but also equality of access to the external means and personal aptitudes whereby individuals can avail themselves of such freedoms. This ideal of equality means, in particular, that one may regard as acceptable those economic and social inequalities which:

- contribute to greater productive efficiency, to the extent thatinsofar as they permit development of the abilities of all women and all men;
- spring from the free choice of persons to use their equal abilities differently;
- result from initial inequalities of talents and of physical or mental capacities, after society has done what waseverything reasonably possible to correct those initial inequalities and guarantee the persons concerned the best exercise of their fundamental rights.

Inequalities are unacceptable, on the other hand, when they:

- contribute only to improvement of the capacities of persons already among the most fortunate in that respect;
- result from the submission of women to the power of men;
- reflect discrimination based upon skin colour, religion, sex or ethnic group.

### ***1.6 Solidarity***

The corollary of equal rights is an equal responsibility of persons and nations towards other persons and other nations, and an equal responsibility of each generation towards future generations. It follows that, for a given human community, the access of other human communities to a level of development equivalent to its own takes moral precedence over the access of that community to a higher level of development. ThatThis presupposes, in particular, that the pursuit of economic development is only legitimate to the extent thatinsofar as it does not debar future generations from an at least equivalent level of development. ThatIt also presupposes that the access offer the poorest countries to the means of ensuring the fundamental rights of their nationals must constitute, for the rich countries, a priority higher than the raising of their own living standards. of living.

### ***1.7 Effective democracy***

A humane economics represents a political project in that it aims to make the instruments of knowledge and the techniques of economics serve the sovereignty of citizens. Its political ideal is that of an effective democracy in which each citizen enjoys genuine equality of participation in collective choices and an effective capacity to control and sanction individuals and institutions mandated to implement such choices. This ideal is a far cry indeed from the present functioning of representative democracies. The latter proved that they constituted the most suitable setting for

promoting the infinite growth of market output and defence of the interests of the most efficacious successful lobbies. They also long permitted improved living prospects for the most underprivileged and a reduction of inequalities. But it has to be recognized that nowadays they have the utmost difficulty in just containing the accentuation of inequalities and the domination of market logic over the requirements of justice and human development. This breakdown is not a temporary sign of technical difficulties linked to globalization but points to an imperfection inherent in the political rules of the game, favouring the social groups with the most extensive capacities for defending their interests. Reflection and action in favour of a humane economics are therefore indissociable from a work of institutional innovation with a view to introducing ushering in effective democracy.

## *2. Economics as a "humane science"*

### *2.1 Economics as a "science"*

Economics lays claim to the status of a science because it offers an explanation of behaviour patterns and social phenomena based on consistent theoretical models whose findings are provisionally given consideration only if they are not refuted by the facts. In claiming the status of a science we are not making out that we can prescribe laws as effective and universal as the laws of physics. What we are saying is simply that, whatever the particular difficulty in producing true knowledge of social phenomena, there should be no considering in this area that absolutely anything goes, everything and just the opposite can be stated where statements are concerned. Just as the impossibility of foolproof forecasts (since nobody can see fathom the future) makes it no less of a necessity of necessary to make forecasts, our inability to lay down universal laws of life in society does not dispense us from rejecting relativism and obscurantism and from seeking to limit our ignorance. Trying to see social behaviour patterns and phenomena in a scientific light is thus a legitimate approach responding to the concern to understand the world in which we live, with a view to identifying ways of achieving leaving us in better control of our future.

### *2.2 Yes to mathematics, no to scientism*

Wherever possible, economics makes use of mathematics since it is a language enabling the logical consistency of a piece of reasoning to be checked, and of statistical and econometric techniques in order to compare theoretical findings with the facts. But these techniques are merely the possible tools of the scientific approach; they are not the necessary manifestation and, still less, the end purpose of this reasoning. In the many cases where mathematical formalization cannot be brought to bear, the economist may and must nevertheless develop rigorous reasoning. The relevant option is not between the full use of tools identical to those of the natural sciences and obscurantism. Instead of seeking systematically to imitate the scientific methods developed for the study of physical phenomena, economists must develop methods better suited to their specific object of study, which does not necessarily translate into figures and equations.

As a social science, economics is distinguished from the natural sciences in that it cannot prescribe universal laws indefinitely linked to the nature of things, but only behavioural laws conditioned by human institutions and conventions whose relevance is variable in time and space. The "laws of economics" are thus to a very great extent "laws of people" which, though they may be extremely restrictive in the short term on account of the inertia of institutions, conventions and beliefs, remain nonetheless fundamentally open to amendment and remodelling through human will.

### *2.4 Science of an integral human being*

As a science of human choices, economics cannot be reduced to formalization of the behaviour of an "individual" or a "consumer" without consideration any regard for the spiritual, social and political dimension of human action. Human beings are not impersonal "atoms" driven by universal and timeless mechanical properties of reaction to their environment; they are not mere *elements* of social interplay but *players* acting upon as much as they react to an environment, and *thinkers* conducting themselves in the light of a personal interpretation of the environment that is influenced by their social origin, their culture, their beliefs, and so on. A humane economics must therefore be the economy of an integral human being who is at once consumer, producer, worker, member of a family and citizen of a country, who is at once guided by calculation, sustained by values and guided or constrained/curbed by social conventions.

### ***2.5 Multidisciplinarity***

The very object of its work (human societies and human behaviour) obliges economics to engage in dialogue with the other social sciences with the same object of study. While it is true that economics seeks to develop its analyses in all spheres of human activity, and not just that of production and exchange, it must reject the imperialistic attitude that consists in considering from the outset that its specific methods are the most relevant, or even the only relevant ones, and it must consider that it is also the business of the other disciplines to apply their own methods to the traditional preserves of economics. Without saying no to the specific methodological features of the various disciplines, and without preaching a total relativism as to the relevance of their conclusions, we can take advantage of the intermingling of their tools and of the comparison or complementarity of their results. This necessary dialogue with the other disciplines calls for renovated teaching of the economic sciences with an admixture of features of — notably — sociology, notably, sociology, history, political science, psychology and anthropology.

## ***3. About the supposedly dominant neoliberal ideology***

### ***3.1 The supposedly dominant theses***

A number of theses that we speak of here as neoliberal are today often presented as expressions of the dominant economic thinking in academic, business and political circles the world over. They proclaim, in particular:

- the absolute superiority of the market over any other mode of resource management;
- that the free pursuit of individual interests is the best means of conducing to the general interest;
  - that most of the economic and social difficulties clearly characteristic of the market economies do not reflect any failing of the markets but the impediments to free competition constituted by institutions, regulations and the tax burdentaxation;
    - the futility or harmfulness of macroeconomic policies aimed at sustaining activity and employment in a period of recession;
      - that the superiority of market mechanisms reflects the laws of nature, which it would consequently be absurd to oppose;
      - that the increased well-being of peoples is contingent upon deregulation, the full liberalization of trade and a reduction in public spending and taxation for the benefit of private expenditure and activity; in short,; the declinebowing of politics and the State for the sake ofto individual initiative.

### ***3.2 Neoliberalism is an ideology and not a science***

The above theses, although they often rest upon partly true contentions, can in no case be regarded as results scientifically established by economic theory and history, which have in fact established quite different and even radically opposed propositions. These theses constitute an ideology based on individualist and materialist values systematically putting individual initiative and responsibility above collective action and solidarity.

The approach resting upon these theses cannot be dismissed simply because it constitutes an ideology. To the extent that insofar as they permit the updating of values and goals underlying political choices, ideologies are a necessary ingredient of public debate. This approach, on the other hand, is discredited precisely because it carefully avoids presenting itself as an ideology and claims to reflect a state of science. In so doing, it clouds public debate. What is worse, it fundamentally leads to the destruction of public debate and hence of democracy. For if science can lay down inescapable laws of nature imposing a one and only universal economic system, citizens have no choice but to knuckle under and any economic policy debate becomes so much hot air.

### ***3.3 Liberal values distorted by neoliberalism***

Neoliberal ideology does not hold a monopoly of liberal values and, to a great extent, the only thing "liberal" about it is in the name. Behind political liberalism lay the salutary desire to affirm the autonomy and responsibility of individuals and to protect them against the alienation constituted by submission to a law at odds with their conscience. Contrary to that approach, neoliberal ideology attempts — without any debate — to subject personal conscience to "laws of economics" which, for want of being scientifically based, must be looked on as a sort of religion in which citizens and political leaders are enjoined to believe, under pain of falling prey to all the ills of the earth and, more immediately and prosaically, suffering capital flight. Furthermore, at the source of economic liberalism we find two essential trends basically seeking either protection of natural human rights or the common good. Those goals are in fact diverted by a neoliberal ideology which, in the guise of natural rights, focuses on freedom of trade and accumulation of market goods and, in the guise of common good, can only think in terms of a summation of individual interests.

Likewise, the emphasis nowadays laid by some liberal discourse on the theme of individual responsibility tends to divert a genuine value towards the stigmatization of the least efficient individuals, according to market evaluation criteria. *Responsibility* is thus turned into the *culpability* of the weakest and into the merit of the strongest, individuals becoming responsible only vis-à-vis themselves and not others. To affirm that the poor and the unemployed are responsible for their lot is a means of relieving the others of their own responsibility and justifies a lowering of their fiscal contribution to the production of collective services available to all. And when individual responsibility serves as a pretext for collective deregulation, market logic left to its own devices may lead to generalized irresponsibility regarding the environment, public health, the living conditions of future generations, and so on.

Contrary to the caricature made of it by neoliberal thinking, responsibility constitutes an authentic social value. It expresses the personal requirement of *answering for* one's acts before the community of men and women. By recognizing that the satisfaction of individual needs does not suffice to legitimate one's action and that there must also be a concern for the impact of such action on others, the *responsible* person becomes a citizen, a member of a human community whose individual members recognize that they are bound by a mutually agreed obligation to take account of others and of the common good. True responsibility thus takes us to the exact opposite of the "every man for himself" promoted by the neoliberal ideology.

It is therefore essential to distinguish the liberal tradition from its modern hijacking by ultraliberalism. Hence we have been describing as "neoliberal" here a set of theses whose true

purpose is simply to promote the interests of all those who can derive the utmost benefit from a generalized deregulation of markets and the submission of political considerations to the demands of development of requirements of increased market production. There are genuine liberal values — such as freedom and individual responsibility — which constitute the common legacy of the human conscience but cannot on any account be said to justify a world based upon the maximization of market profits. Freedom and individual responsibility are compatible with various models and not just one model of economic or political organization.

### ***3.4 The victory of neoliberalism is only political***

The height of the paradox is that the type of economy preached by the neoliberals is not conceivable without a particularly strong and restrictive State. For the "free market" is not a state of nature but an institution which, to work properly, cannot dispense with the law, justice and the police, namely without the efficient production of public goods. But furthermore and above all, as our times amply illustrate, the social groups deriving the greatest profit from the liberalization of the economy also stand in the greatest need of a political authority sufficiently strong or skilful to impose a model on the underprivileged minorities, or the unprivileged majority, and rules of the game that they would not support spontaneously. The victory of neoliberalism is thus, first and foremost, the remarkable victory of a minority managing to impose on the majority the policies most in keeping with its own interests. It is precisely because the recognition of such a political victory is intolerable that the victors try to ascribe it if possible to an imaginary "economic science", or else to liberal "values" that at bottom they do not even really share. The point is that the alienated citizen would rather submit to a supposedly universal economic law than bow to the brute force of the richest.

### ***3.5 The dangers of an anti-economic reaction***

It is most fortunately the case that not all citizens are knuckling under. The inability of intellectuals and politicians to promote other visions of the economy able to vie with the dominant neoliberal thinking has given rise to an international movement of protest and resistance to the worldwide liberalization of markets. This protest is legitimate and necessary. But it also runs the risk of contributing, in spite of itself, to simplistic associations between market economy and social or environmental horror, between economic science and ultraliberalism, and between economic laws and the death of democracy. Yet this cannot be blamed on an insurgent civil society. For one thing, such simplifications are sometimes denounced within this movement and, for another, where they do exist they are the logical consequence of the dominant notion that the present forms of world capitalism put a full stop on have brought history to a halt, as scientifically validated by economic theory. So long as entrepreneurs and economists do not claim otherwise, it is politically reasonable to regard the economy, capitalists and economists as political enemies to be fought in order to restore the legitimate power of the citizens to decide the sort of world they want to live in.

Thus it is that the legitimate allergy to social horror is liable to turn into a blinding allergy to any economic reasoning at all. And thus it is that one diverts, turns against the instruments of economics, the fight that should be fought against the institutions and political postures allowing a minority to impose a mode of economic development in line with its interests. The last, but not least, of the evils of the ideological domination of neoliberalism is thus, by causing the stigmatization of economic horror, to hide the political horror represented by the lack of genuine democracy.

## 4. *Some true lessons of economic analysis*

### 4.1 *Public goods and private goods*

Since the end of the nineteenth century, there has been a virtual consensus among economists that the value of any thing or activity is determined by its capacity to satisfy the needs of human beings, and that individuals are sovereign in determining what for them are sources of satisfaction. "Producing" is therefore the activity whereby human beings mobilize time and means to satisfy their needs. A utilitarian and reductionist interpretation of this interpretation/definition has, it is true, served as the basis for a strictly material or market conception of wealth; but that is merely an additional distortion of economic theory for the sake of a materialistic and individualistic ideology. The only logical consequence of this definition is that anything providing satisfaction for at least one person possesses value and therefore constitutes a commodity in the strict economic sense of the term. It follows that non-market activities and public goods presumably possess as much value as market activities and private goods. Justice, civil peace, education, environmental protection, security, culture, self-respect, political or community commitment, and so on, are goods in the same way as foodstuffs, cars and computers.

The fact that one cannot gauge all public goods and non-market goods for incorporation in our GDP in no way detracts from their eminently productive nature; it merely discredits public choices taking account only of values that can be measured through accounting and statistics. To maintain, for example, that "only private enterprises create wealth and create real jobs" is therefore a crass error of economic reasoning. All goods and all jobs that help to satisfy a need are "real", whatever their management and production modes. Consequently, public spending and taxes do not constitute "levies" on the wealth of nations but, respectively, a contribution to the wealth of nations and the price to be paid in order to produce that contribution.

The sovereignty of individuals in determining their needs presupposes that they alone are empowered to decide on what they consider to be the optimum split of resources between private goods and public goods. In a community of citizens, where opinions on that split are bound to vary greatly, only democratic procedures of collective choice can determine the share of resources that the community must devote to public goods. It follows that the "right" level of State, of public spending and of taxation is neither the lowest possible nor any other level that can be determined through economics; it is that which the citizens determine democratically.

### 4.2 *Virtues and limits of the market economy*

A market economy based upon individual freedom of choice and initiative and the organization of competitive markets constitutes the economic system that is usually the most efficient where the production of commodity goods and services is concerned. In this area, and *under certain conditions*, competition and decentralized decision-making permit circulation of the necessary information for the ongoing adaptation of productive choices. They stimulate and reward effort and innovation; they penalize waste and question guaranteed income. Freedom of trade among persons and nations may likewise contribute to a better division of labour, facilitate the spread of technological progress and engender mutual gains, on the assumption that conditions have been established for sharing out the gains equitably.

The market is on the other hand usually incapable of providing a satisfactory solution to the problems presented by the production of public goods and the fact of making allowance for the external effects of private choices on collective well-being. Nevertheless one cannot establish a strict and simplistic division of labour between a sphere of commodity production reserved for the mechanisms of the capitalist market economy and a sphere of non-commodity production set aside for various forms of public management. For one thing, the productive performance of markets depends closely on the quality of infrastructures, institutions and the necessary regulations for healthy and fair competition. The other point is that productive performance and the accumulation



of market goods constitute not values but instruments subordinated to pursuit of the purposes of a humane economy. Politics may therefore be seen at times as the indispensable auxiliary of the market and, at others, as its no less essential guardian in the quest for the common good.

We believe in certain undeniable virtues of competition, but not in those of economic war. Economic war presupposes fiscal and social dumping and the submission of any moral imperative to the demands of profitability. Healthy competition is that relating to the appropriateness and quality of products, that which encourages work well done and innovation. Its development has no need of absolute freedom of competition by no matter what means; it only requires that all the players play by the same rules and that those rules do not rule out profit. This healthy competition is thus compatible, in particular, with a high level of social welfare, the desirable production of public goods and the submission of management to observance of the rights of women and men. Without the institutions and regulations to direct the productive energy of a competitive economy towards humane, sustainable and equitable development, a market economy degenerates into a society of generalized competition destroying social ties and the environment, and spawning growing inequalities at odds with the most elementary notion of justice.

### ***4.3 Economic policies***

We recognize the utility of macroeconomic policies in preventing recessions or increased inflation, and the need to make pragmatic use of them and develop international coordination in their regard. Contrary to conventional wisdom, globalization has not deprived national policies of all leeway. On the contrary, States have continued to apply different policies with equally different results. While the conditions of use of the traditional instruments of economic policy have changed and become more complex, those instruments are still no less essential.

We also recognize the need for proactive development strategies, we dispute the idea of a one-and-only model for the smooth integration of the developing countries into the world economy, and we affirm that the function of international institutions is not to impose a uniform development strategy but to provide negotiated assistance for the sovereign choices of nations. As actually avowed by the international financial institutions, the "structural adjustment plans" imposed on the developing countries at the end of the last century have all too often had disastrous effects in terms of inequalities and poverty. The new poverty alleviation priority now posted by those institutions is appreciable. But it must not lead just to action to correct the disasters originated by ill-controlled liberalization. We cannot dispense with a rigorous critical analysis of the mechanisms peculiar to the economic system which give rise to poverty. The next requirement is not to lick the wounds of an inhuman system but to promote an authentic human development of which the reduction of poverty would be a natural consequence. Such promotion will not materialize without greater solidarity on the part of the rich countries in various forms: debt cancellation, more public assistance, technology transfers, etc.

National policies must be overlaid and sometimes replaced by international or world regulations. For there are supranational public goods (peace, climate, biodiversity, financial stability, etc.) which require treaties or supranational institutions with powers and means suited to their functions. This need for supranational public regulations cannot be used as a pretext for any backtracking on democracy. The world's citizens cannot leave fundamental public choices to the sole discretion of committees of experts or perhaps even of representatives of States. The legitimacy of international economic institutions presupposes an equitable participation of all countries in the decision-making bodies, the transparency of their deliberations and decisions, the external and independent evaluation of their management, and a real power of oversight of their activity for national parliaments and representatives of civil society.

The need for public regulations is in most cases matched by our inability to define *a priori* and objectively the "right" and the "wrong" policies. This inability derives from the inseparability of issues relating to efficiency and to justice. Even when prompted at the outset solely by a quest for

efficient resource use, any policy habitually modifies the distribution of costs and benefits among the persons concerned. It therefore raises a question regarding fair distribution, which in turn pertains to a political choice. So when the economist advises the politician, it is important to stress that he or she cannot just take over the matter of deciding what constitutes the "right" sort of society. The economist simply contributes certain material needed for public debate, including data regarding efficient resource use, but has no scientific solution to the conflicts of distribution and the conflicts of values associated with just about any economic issue. Such conflicts can only be settled through public debate and genuinely democratic political institutions. Economics clarifies but does not determine collective choices.

#### ***4.4 The limits inherent in public action***

The aggravation of many social problems is not always caused by a disengagement of the public authorities and curtailed financial resources. They may also result from an inefficient use of instruments and public funds. The production of collective goods and of rules by the government and public organizations is not subjected to the competition which might prompt the efficient use of resources and improved quality of collective services. Hence the failure of the market in particular activities does not necessarily mean that public management is preferable. Sometimes the best way of reconciling efficiency and common good is to encourage private production subjected to specifications and rules established by the public authority.

In cases where public production appears to be the only possible or at least most fitting course, the institutional framework must produce the necessary incentives for efficiency and guarantee the oversight and accountability of public decision-makers. Taxation must represent the price that citizens are prepared to pay for the production of public goods. That presupposes transparent and openly debated procedures for evaluating public policies and effective punishment of embezzlement or wastage of public funds.

The pressure exerted by electoral competition does not constitute an adequate and sufficient incentive for efficient public action. Clientelism on the one hand, which may be a plus in the production of private goods, has disastrous effects on the production of public goods since it comes up with decisions as to what commits the community in the name of private interests. Furthermore, the global assessment of government policy via the ballot box, at more or less distant intervals, can never replace the necessary ongoing evaluation of public policies and finances. Institutional innovations guaranteeing effective oversight by citizens, with a suitable sanction of public accountability, thus constitute an essential field of research of a humane economics in that they are a prerequisite for effective democracy.

## *Tentative conclusions*

As a provisional conclusion, let us reformulate the core of our approach on the basis of which it seems to us that it should be appreciated and, as appropriate, supported or rejected.

(1) We understand that many of our fellow citizens may today regard the real economy and economic science as the allied instruments of the subjection of human beings to the sole demands of market profitability.

(2) We affirm that this inhumanity of the economy is merely symptomatic of a political victory of neoliberalism and not the inescapable consequence of the supposed universal laws set forth by economic science.

(3) We maintain that economic theory establishes the necessity and possibility of political regulation but that it is never able to determine the "right" policies, which is always ultimately a matter to be decided by the citizens.

(4) The present operating modes of capitalism and democracy do not bring history to a halt; their obvious defects call on the contrary for a set of institutional innovations likely to give rise to a

sustainable and more equitable form of development and to a more effective democracy restoring genuine citizen sovereignty.

(5) The legitimate contesting of the visible evils of neoliberalism must not be allowed to justify an attitude of mere protest and the outright rejection of the inputs of economic reasoning, the market economy and representative democracy.

6. As economists, we are the very people responsible for the lack of collective commitment *to* making known the true state of economic thinking and to publicizing sufficiently credible alternative policies around which citizens and their representative organizations could rally.

(7) The lack of collective commitment of economists is partly responsible for the widespread illusion that there exists a one and only orthodoxy underwriting the inhuman economy that is today rejected by civil society. To correct this shortcoming, we now wish to engage in an ongoing dialogue with citizens, entrepreneurs and political leaders in order to promote an economy that serves people and to restore credit to political voluntarism.

(8) Our outlook differs from that of the international associative and syndicalist movement which is setting about constituting an opposition force of citizens worldwide. It is also distinct from the intellectual enterprise meanwhile conducted by a host of research circles or think tanks. The aim — quite apart from individual personal commitments as citizens or researchers — is to lend visibility to the international community of researchers and actors of the economy which is already gathering latently around the values of a humane economics. We thus hope to offset the low impact of these values owing, paradoxically, to the wealth and diversity of our commitments, for want of instruments, places and symbols able to lend substance to this community in the eyes of our fellow citizens.

(9) It would be pointless to conceal the conflicts of interest underlying the present confrontation between those wielding economic power and a part of civil society. We nevertheless hope that the future will leave room for the dialogue needed between these currently opposed forces. Could not economists and other researchers in the social sciences also play a mediatory role in starting such a dialogue?

(10) To prolong and promote the initiative of this manifesto, we have established with economist colleagues in a score of countries the International Association for a Humane Economics and the World Forum for a Humane Economics, whose short-term objectives are:

- to constitute a vast international network of researchers, entrepreneurs and intellectuals upholding the principles of a humane economics;
- following the debate aroused by the various publications under way of this manifesto throughout the world, to draw up a *World Charter for a Humane Economics* in a form accessible to the general public and circulated simultaneously by the media in as many countries as possible;
- to decide on a number of priority reflection and research projects with a view to promoting the construction of a coherent economic outlook built on the principles of a humane economics, and to compare the results of the various national studies at an annual forum.
- 

All those so wishing are invited to show their moral support for this initiative by completing and returning the form below. They are also invited to notify their amendments, criticisms and suggestions to the World Forum for a Humane economics (fmeh@wandoo.fr). Readers who have borne with us thus far are either in agreement or in disagreement with the essential inspiration of this text. All that is asked of them is to take the few minutes necessary simply to convey this agreement or disagreement. A few words represent a modest cost indeed of discharging the most elementary of our responsibilities towards our fellow citizens: telling them what the economy means to us.

## Support form

" I the undersigned,

First name:

Surname :

Title or activity :

Organization :

Address :

Country :

E-mail:

without necessarily approving in detail each of the terms of this text, share its inspiration and goals and am in agreement with the initiative it proposes. "

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