

To Die for Wall Street

Coronavirus, Social Classes and the Prevailing Culture

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For Texas Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, there is no dilemma, the economy must be saved and the restrictions imposed must be lifted to curb the covid-19 epidemic. He claimed to be willing to die to revive the economy. To die for Wall Street.

The COVID-19 epidemic has clearly revealed the process of decomposition—progressively accelerated over the past half century—of the capitalist system in its political, economic, social and cultural aspects. The leading political elites that presented themselves as—and long ago were to a certain extent—mediators between the economic power and society, have ceased to be so and, with nuances, are now simply transmission belts of real power: towering financial, industrial and commercial capital. Even as managers of the dominant system they are in clear decline: two or three decades ago there were still some among them with some capacity and ability to manage the State. They were able to foresee, evaluate and decide. And they used to surround themselves with competent people.

Four examples of the decline of leading political elites are Bolsonaro, Macron, Trump, and Boris Johnson. Macron, with a Diploma of Finance Inspector, was an officer of the Rothschild Bank, and had never acted in politics until he was propelled to it by Hollande who appointed him Minister of Economy. He is now President of France, when his true qualities only enable him at most to carry out an activity in the finance sector.

Citizen intervention through so-called representative democracy could function as a counterweight to the degradation of the political elites. But it is increasingly evident that the myth of "representative democracy" or "delegative democracy" as some call it, after a long agony is now in a state of advanced decomposition. This democracy consists in citizens periodically being called upon to choose between different names that appear on the ballots and choose those who they



believe—after a brainwashing suffered during the electoral campaign—who will be the candidate who will best represent their interests and opinions, delegating on such person—without limitation or some subsequent control—the power to decide on everything that may affect their own existence in one way or another.

As a general rule, the elected candidates will do the opposite of what they promised. Because—as professional politicians think and some say it out loud—it is one thing to campaign, and quite another to govern. A situation that has

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worsened considerably with the state of great need created by the pandemic. The authoritarian drift, at different levels, is visible in all the States affected by the pandemic: no participation in the decisions of the intermediate strata of society: unions of the professionals directly involved (doctors and nurses), of the workers affected by the paralysis of vast

sectors of commerce, industry and services; with the Executive Powers legislating through decrees of necessity and urgency on matters that have little or nothing to do with the pandemic, restrictions, beyond what circumstances require, of collective and individual freedoms and the increase in cases of violent repression by the security forces.

The pandemic has also starkly highlighted the insurmountable shortcomings of the capitalist system in the field of public health, both in terms of material and human resources, as well as therapeutic and medical research.

The situation prior to the pandemic

With the exhaustion of the welfare state¹ in the early 1970s, the capitalist system once again showed and is showing more and more clearly its inhuman and antisocial character. This is how the essential goods for survival (food, health services, medicines, housing worthy of the name, etc.) were left out of the reach of the poorest sector of the world population: the three billion human beings who live with less than \$ 2,5 a day. And the idea of public service (health, education, etc., for everyone) and an irrevocable right to essential goods to live with a minimum of dignity, was replaced by the statement that everything must be subject to the laws of the market. In other words, all State activity is conditioned by cost / benefit calculations and is aimed at preserving and increasing the profits of large financial, industrial and commercial capital. This is the dogma that governs the capitalist system and its economic, social and cultural aspects and that does not accept refutations or alternatives.

I - Shortage of material and human resources in the area of public health

This must be attributed, first of all, to the economic cost / benefit approach that governs government policies. But there has been a manifest lack of foresight due to various factors. No one can ignore, even less the experts, that epidemics and pandemics recur regularly. If the rulers are alerted by their scientific advisers and they ignore them, it is evident proof that the leaders of the State act in matters of public health following the principles and rules of the current system and, in most cases, with malpractice and negligence. It also often happens that official scientific advisors are part of the scientific bureaucracy that is functional to government policies on public health, riddled with clumsiness and contradictions in times of a health emergency.

¹ ↪ The welfare state became generalised in the most industrialised countries, especially after the Second World War, and in a very circumscribed and temporary way in some peripheral countries. The welfare state was not, as is frequently heard, a state that filled the gaps in the capitalist system or healed the wounds inflicted by the system by means of social benefits. The welfare state set itself as an imperative to maintain a growth rate, whatever it was, as long as it was positive, and to distribute compensations in order to always ensure a counterbalance to the wage relationship. (Dominique Meda).

II - Deficits in the field of science

Dogmatism in scientific methods is deeply rooted in the culture of the capitalist system. It begins in school teaching² and ends in research. The dominant culture has imposed a fragmented, linear and static study of the facts, both social and natural, that is incorporated into the spontaneous cognitive processes of the common people and the prevailing methodology in the field of science. This approach responds to the prevailing system and the claim of its beneficiaries that it is permanent, unalterable and immutable. This is a vision synthesized by Margaret Thatcher with the phrase "There is no alternative" (TINA). It is the allergic reaction of the ruling classes to anything that means questioning the status quo.

In the cultural and scientific media there is a sort of selection or ranking—betwixt spontaneous and promoted—of the prestige or fame of certain people, who almost always occupy the top positions in universities, in public and private organisations in the field of research, etc.—and they are beneficiaries of "positive discrimination" in terms of media coverage, charges, subsidies and awards. They have in common not to question the private ownership of the means of production and exchange, to attribute to the capitalist market the quality inherent in human society, not to question the existing elitist political-social system (the so-called "representative democracy" as understood by the possessing classes) and consider any reference to capitalist exploitation anachronistic or politically incorrect.

In their respective domains they formulate theories and statements claiming absolute truths, they usually have a unilateral approach to approach the object of their investigations, ignoring their multiple determinations and they are unable to question their own methods. They reject the scientific methodology consisting of permanently questioning (peer reviews) the results of the investigations and conclusions, which allows them to rework and reorganise the hypotheses, theories, and even the research methods and tools in the search for a greater correspondence between observation and facts. This methodology is based, among other things, on the application of the rules of logic.

Eli de Gortari, a Mexican logician and a philosopher of science, wrote about it:... *logic, as we have already said, is concerned with finding in the process of scientific activity, the forms and functions with which it proceeds, to develop them systematically and thus make them more effective instruments for scientific research itself.*³ Therefore, there is a necessary, permanent and enriching interrelation between the research method and the process and the object of the research.

Marx, in the Epilogue to the second German edition of Capital (London 1873), wrote:

The bourgeoisie, in France and England, had conquered political power. From that moment on, the class struggle, both in the practical and in the theoretical, took on increasingly accentuated and threatening forms. The bells rang dead for the scientific bourgeois economy. It was no longer a question of whether this or that theorem was true, but whether capital found it useful or harmful, comfortable or uncomfortable, whether or not it violated police ordinances. Hired swordsmen replaced selfless research, and apologetics' bad conscience and mean intentions took the place of scientific research without bias.

And in the same Epilogue, defending dialectics as a general theory of movement and change in nature and in society, he wrote that it is scandal and abomination *for the bourgeoisie and its doctrinal spokesmen*. In other words, the common

² ↪ Students tend to resort to a very simple causal scheme to explain the events according to which the relationship between cause and effect is linear and in one direction, derived from the use of these simplifying rules for everyday implicit learning... However, most scientific theories require understanding situations as an interaction of systems, in which ... the cause / effect relationship is not in one sense, but rather implies a reciprocal relationship: It is not that an agent acts on an object modifying it, but two systems interact modifying each other. Juan Ignacio Pozo Municio and Miguel Ángel Gómez Crespo: Aprender y enseñar ciencia. Del conocimiento cotidiano al conocimiento científico – Causalidad lineal frente a interacción de sistemas; . Editorial Morata, Madrid, 2006. Pág. 116.

³ ↪ Eli de Gortari, Lógica general, Edit. Grijalbo, México, 1965, pág. 15.

trait of the dominant elites in the fields of the social sciences and the so-called "hard" sciences is that they are allergic to anything that means questioning the status quo, in their own field of work and in society in general. We will give two examples: one in political economy and the other in biology.

Joseph Stiglitz, highly sought after in academic and political tribunals and celebrated by "progressives" around the world, received in 2001, along with Akerlof and Spence, the "Nobel" Prize for Economics (funded by the Bank of Sweden). Proof of the ineffectiveness of Stiglitz's theories and methods for analysing the real economy is a report he produced in 2002, commissioned by the financial groups Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, where he stated that the activity of these groups, which guaranteed the mortgage loans granted by banks to poor creditors, implied practically no risk for the banking system. According to Stiglitz the risk was of the order of between one in half a million and one in three million.⁴ Contrary to Stiglitz's "predictions", based exclusively on mathematical models, the policies of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac contributed greatly to triggering the financial crisis that erupted in 2008.

Jacques Monod, Nobel laureate in biology, made important contributions to the study of molecular biology. In the course of his investigations, following Francis Crick and in Monod's book "Chance and Necessity" (a "best seller"), he made peremptory and purportedly definitive statements about the interaction between DNA and RNA (the alleged irreversibility of transmission of information from DNA to RNA), which Crick called in 1958, in sheer arrogance "Central dogma of molecular biology." But they proved to be wrong almost simultaneously with their formulation by Monod in 1970.⁵

Overcoming the dogmatic and self-sufficient approach of Monod and Crick enabled making progress, among other things, in the knowledge of some diseases and their eventual treatment, such as AIDS. Detection of reverse transcriptase in infected cell cultures allowed the discovery of the immunodeficiency syndrome virus made in 1983 by Luc Montagnier, Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and other researchers. But Monod was not spontaneously adept at scientific dogmatism—as not a few researchers are—but a conscious militant of it.

Indeed, on page 145 of the 1970 French edition of Monod's book *Seuil*, the phrase appears: *As you can see, this system, due to its properties, due to its microscopic clockwork that establishes, between DNA and protein, as also between organism and means, one-way relationships, defies any "dialectical" description.*⁶ *He is deeply Cartesian and not Hegelian: the cell is undoubtedly a machine* (our underscores). In the same book (pages 51-59 of the same edition) Monod devotes himself to criticizing Marx, dialectical materialism, and particularly Engels' Dialectic of Nature. Thus this approach of the ruling classes contaminates as well biological studies and medical research.

⁴ ↪ Since the risk level numbers provided by Stiglitz are worthy of a science fiction author, for the avoidance of doubt we quote Stiglitz's original text in the Conclusion of his Report: *This analysis shows that, based on historical data, the probability of a shock as severe as embodied in the risk-based capital standard is substantially less than one in 500,000 – and may be smaller than one in three million.*²⁰ Given the low probability of the stress test shock occurring, and assuming that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac hold sufficient capital to withstand that shock, the exposure of the government to the risk that the CSEs will become insolvent appears quite low. Fannie Mae papers: [Implications of the New Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Risk-based Capital Standard](#). Joseph E. Stiglitz, Jonathan M. Orszag and Peter R. Orszag), Volume I, Issue 2 March 2002

⁵ ↪ In the same year that Monod's book was published, several researchers discovered the existence of an enzyme, *reverse transcriptase*. Americans Harold Temin and David Baltimore, in retroviruses and French Mirko Beljanski, in bacteria. The researchers announced the existence of this enzyme at the VI Symposium on Molecular Biology held in Baltimore (United States) in June 1972.

⁶ ↪ Monod viewed the causal relationship as a one-way relationship, thus ignoring the interaction between cause and effect.

III - Coronavirus-19

In this context, the coronavirus appeared at the end of 2019, whose initial focus was on Wuhan, China, which informed the World Health Organization on December 31, 2019 of its existence and on January 12, 2020, informed the WHO of the genetic sequence of the new virus. It was called COVID 19 and it was assigned the official name of SARS CoV-2, making it clear that it is a new virus that continually mutates within the SARS (CoV) -CoV family of viruses: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.⁷

Viruses of the same family—SARS-Cov in 2003 and MERS-Cov in 2012—also caused epidemics albeit more localised and non-planetary like the current COVID 19.

The new virus still presents many unknowns about its behaviour. It could have been addressed with greater

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understanding if the viruses in the same family had been investigated further. But the cost-benefit capitalist logic also worked in this area, which consists of financing the studies from which it is hoped to obtain an immediate or short-term benefit. This is how the research that different scientists were

doing to obtain a vaccine against the other variants of coronavirus was stopped a few years ago.⁸

In the current conditions of a totally interconnected world, in which enormous amounts of people and objects move from one continent to another in a few hours, the foresight to envisage the spread of the epidemic until it became a pandemic in a matter of days was essential.

So it happened. Some countries reacted more or less on time and others did not. The latter due to incompetence or negligence of their leaders or the refrain from reacting so as not to harm the economy, obeying without hesitation the basic rule of capitalism: first profits and then, if there is room, the health and well-being of the people.

As soon as the pandemic made its appearance in one country, with very few exceptions, it immediately overflowed the material and human resources available to combat it. Better said, the preceding shortages of these resources, prevailing in normal times, grew exponentially. Because different statistics and facts clearly show that, for years, there has been a trend to reduce these resources both in absolute numbers and in relation to population growth. Because the business criteria of profitability was applied, flux tendu, just in time, etc.,⁹ it was long forgotten that the public service of health should not be subject to the laws of the market and should always be provided to all without exception and in an effective manner.

⁷ ↪ A study of the new virus by specialists can be seen in The proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2, Kristian G. Andersen, Andrew Rambaut, W. Ian Lipkin, Edward C. Holmes & Robert F. Garry. Nature Medicine (2020) <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-020-0820-9>.

⁸ ↪ Coronavirus: cómo el mundo desaprovechó la oportunidad de tener una vacuna lista para hacer frente a la pandemia <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-52216766>

⁹ ↪ Methods of organising industrial production that consists, to cut costs, of trying to reduce to zero the stocks of raw materials and finished products.

This is how, with few exceptions, in all countries the number of beds in public hospitals have long been reduced,¹⁰ of beds equipped with intensive care equipment, respirators, etc. The appropriate material to carry out the tests was also lacking, an indispensable procedure to contain the pandemic.

For years the medical and nursing professionals, who are permanently overwhelmed, have challenged and complained against this dismantling policy, without further results. Masks or chinstraps, intended to prevent person-to-person contamination, of which significant stocks should have been built up preventively, were dramatically in short supply or missing, even for the most exposed people, such as doctors and nurses. The reason for this is that customary business criteria were also applied in this regard: manufacturing was relocated to reduce costs and inventory was not replaced locally.¹¹

IV. The commodification of pandemics

The coronavirus pandemic naturally generated a mobilisation to find medicines or curative vaccines to combat it and

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preventive vaccines to prevent its recurrence. Fortunately, there are many researchers and professionals who do not submit to the prevailing dogmas and codes, and work in their domain with methodological rigor, a spirit of initiative, creative imagination and a self-critical sense. They are deeply committed and concurrently motivated by their scientific vocation, by the Hippocratic oath and the desire to contribute to ending this humanitarian nightmare.

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The way to reach the market with a drug or a vaccine goes through clinical trials that, given the interests at stake, are littered with all kinds of conniving schemes and manipulation. Among other things, to avoid and / or delay the approval of the use of already existing medicines and at extremely accessible prices, which belong to the public domain since the patent that attributed exclusive rights to a laboratory expired over time.

¹⁰ ↪ For example, in hospitals in France there are 69,000 fewer beds than 15 years ago. <https://www.lequotidiendumedecin.fr/actus-medicales/sante-publique/hospitalisation-complete-69-000-lits-en-moins-en-15-ans>. In recent decades, the number of beds in the French hospital system has experienced a continuous decrease. Between 1982 and 2013 it went from 612,898 to 428,987, a decrease of 30%. During the same period, the French population grew from 55.7 million inhabitants to 66 million inhabitants, an increase of 18.5%; therefore, the number of hospital beds per inhabitant decreased by just over 40%, from 11 beds per 1,000 inhabitants to 6.5 (Data from the World Bank, compiled by the University of Sherbrooke). When the pandemic started in France there were only 5500 beds for intensive care, 5000 in Italy, while in Germany there were more than 25,000 (<https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/le-vrai-faux-de-l-europe/le-vrai-faux-de-l-europe-12-mars-2020>)

In Italy the situation is similar to that of France: privatisation of health services, a cut of 25,000 million euros in the public health budget between 2010 and 2015, 70,000 fewer beds in hospitals in the last ten years, and 30% less beds intended for intensive care than in 2001. (<https://www.laizquierdadiario.com/El-sistema-sanitario-italiano-se-derrumba-bajo-el-peso-de-los-recortes-y-the-coronavirus-crisis>). According to the sources, the figures differ, but all show a persistent general trend for years aimed at the dismantling of public health services.

A different trend is observed in some countries, for example in Germany, South Korea and Japan. A somewhat particular case is the United States where a privatised and socially unequal system is the main risk factor. (https://www.eldiario.es/theguardian/EEUU_0_1001950801.html). In the US the lack of health coverage is a persistent problem and at this moment is all the more crucial: in 2018, 27.5 million people were uninsured at any time of the year, according to data from the Census Bureau, which reflected an increase over the previous year. This causes some of these people to avoid going to a doctor in case of infection: a consultation for someone who does not have insurance can cost hundreds of dollars. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-52273159> Different health policies that are reflected in the mortality rate for contaminated people.

¹¹ ↪ The same offshoring policy for the manufacture of chinstraps has been practiced for decades with drugs and their active ingredients: in the last thirty years China has gone on to produce 80% of the active ingredients of drugs and a substantial part of finished medicines that are consumed in the world. In the 1980s the percentages were exactly the opposite: Europe produced 80% and only 20% was of foreign origin (<https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/quand-l-occident-renonc-a-produire-ses-propres-medicaments-20200413>). Given the current crisis (temporary cessation of Chinese industry and exponential increase in domestic consumption in the Asian country), a global shortage in the supply of medicines for all kinds of diseases can be expected - and is already taking place. It can also be expected that when the shortage in hospital services caused by COVID 19 begins to reverse, it will reproduce again with the avalanche of patients affected by other ailments that were not treated during the pandemic.

This search also highlights the confrontation between two conceptions of medical research: the one that we will call official, dogmatic, orthodox and little attentive to what should be its central object: human beings who "are born free and equal in dignity and rights and they are endowed with reason and conscience", and another that, inspired by the Hippocratic oath, privileges the search for quickly accessible therapeutic solutions, based on studies already carried out and on the experience accumulated in medical practice. This last conception rightly questions the long, laborious, costly and frequently crossed by powerful economic interests, of the "road map" advocated by official science: clinical trials as they are generally practiced.

A first attempt to frame clinical trials with rules took place in 1947 as a reaction to the atrocities committed by German doctors in concentration camps during World War II who used prisoners for their experiments without regard for their sufferings, consequences irreversible about their physical and mental health and integrity or their survival. German doctors were prosecuted in Nuremberg and their defenders argued that they were not concerned with the Hippocratic oath, inapplicable to experimental medicine, and that the ethics of the medical therapist are not applicable to the medical investigator. Shortly after the proceedings, in August 1947, the Nuremberg Code of Medical Ethics was published. We want to highlight its article 4, where it reads: The experiment must be carried out in such a way that all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and all damage are avoided. We emphasise unnecessary, because "argumentum a contrario" means that if the subject's suffering or damage is necessary for the purposes of the investigation, these are admissible. The Nuremberg Code was extensively amended by the Helsinki Declaration of 1964, approved by the World Medical Association assembly and which was then revised several times: in 1975, 1983, 1989, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2008.

These were attempts to overcome the tension between two conceptions of clinical trials: 1) one that considers them a purely cognitive activity unrelated to therapeutics, at most nuanced in some cases (extreme severity of the participating patient) by a "beneficial" treatment or "Compassionate" and 2) another that considers research and therapeutics to be essential, for scientific (interaction and reciprocal feedback of research and medical practice) and humanitarian reasons.

The truth is that in fact the first conception prevails for several reasons. One of them is the use in the tests of a dogmatic and unilateral scientific methodology imposed by the dominant scientific culture. The other is the contamination of the tests by the powerful economic interests of the large transnational pharmaceuticals. Quite often clinical trials are led by researchers financially committed to large laboratories, the so-called "conflict of interest". There is also no shortage of manipulated or simply hidden clinical trials when they can constitute an obstacle to the benefits expected by large laboratories. There are several cases of medicines manufactured by very reputable laboratories, approved for sale and use by official organisations after supposedly "conclusive" clinical trials that have caused serious damage or the death of their users like Merck's Vioxx, finally withdrawn from sale in 2004. In fact, in clinical trials prevails the defence argument of the German doctors convicted in the Nuremberg trials: the ethics of the medical therapist is not applicable to the medical researcher.

The use of placebos in clinical trials deserves a separate paragraph, because in addition to violating the patient's human rights, it is highly questionable scientifically speaking, due to its unilateral approach, since it almost always ignores the psychological, neurobiological component of the "placebo effect".

In a study¹² one can read:

There are some controversies with placebos that are interesting to mention, a) If the doctor tells a patient that what he prescribes is a talcum pill, the placebo response that depends largely on the patient's expectations will be lost; b) If the doctor tells the patient that the placebo he is prescribing is an active drug, the situation is unethical due to false information and in the long run it will be ineffective; and c) If the disease improves with the placebo it means that part of the disease is in the "mind" of the patient.

And in another study¹³ it is pointed out that the placebo effect can cause the brain of the recipient to provoke the endogenous production of molecules with therapeutic effects, for example endorphins, alleviating pain.

Also, the same study reads:

Researchers have shown that the placebo effect is not limited to pain. Depression, post-traumatic stress, ADHD, asthma, cardiovascular disorders, Parkinson's disease ... Its fields of application are constantly expanding.

So the use of placebos in clinical trials raises two fundamental objections:

- 1) It is based on the fact that the patient is not informed that a placebo is administered, which implies inhuman treatment (the medicine he may need is not supplied) and degrading (the conditions are hidden from the patient, who receives the treatment equivalent to a laboratory guinea pig).
- 2) The placebo is erroneously considered as an inert substance, when considering its possible psychological and neurobiological effects; it really is not.

V - How the pandemic affects different social classes

1. Confinement is experienced in a very different way by people who have a small home where large families sometimes cohabit and those who have spacious and comfortable permanent homes and / or weekend residences. At the extremes are on the one hand those who do not respect the slogan of staying at home for the simple reason that they lack it and live on the street and on the other those who can respect it because they are "confined" walking freely in their huge residences surrounded by large parks with swimming pools and play areas, on their private islands or on board their yachts.¹⁴

Although general statistics are not published, there are data that indicate that the mortality rate is higher in poor neighbourhoods and areas with poor infrastructure. And those who must travel on public transport, for work or other reasons, suffer more contamination risks.

¹² ↪ El placebo en la práctica y en la investigación clínica. S. G. Tempone Pérez. http://scielo.isciii.es/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0212-71992007000500010

¹³ ↪ Effet placebo, Marie-Catherine Mérat <https://www.science-et-vie.com/corps-et-sante/les-vrais-secrets-de-l-effet-placebo-51442>

¹⁴ ↪ Coronavirus: un complejo de mega millonarios con su propio centro de pruebas desata la furia en la Costa Azul <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/el-mundo/un-complejo-residencial-megamillonarios-su-propio-centro-nid2356154>

2. Among those who live on a salary there are several types of scenarios depending on the nature of their work. Those who work in essential services often do so without adequate protection. Others can continue their work at home via telework, if their type of occupation allows it. Freelance artisans doing home work (electricians, plumbers, home helpers, etc.) have to choose between violating confinement or ceasing to earn income. The same is true for small entrepreneurs and merchants who must remain inactive by government order. While waiting for vague government promises of financial aid.

So there are now many people who lack income and are acutely faced with the problem of how to continue feeding. And if you get sick and have no social coverage, you cannot afford the costs of health services. According to [the ILO](#), 80% of the world's active population (3,3 billion people) are affected by the partial or total closure of workplaces.

The ILO study reports that 1,25 billion workers are employed in sectors at high risk of a "drastic and devastating" increase in layoffs, reduced wages and hours worked. And two billion working in the informal economy are particularly threatened. This case is the most precarious. In Iberian American countries and throughout the Global South, the informal sector is huge. For example, Mexico's GDP places it among the 20 largest economies in the system, but, according to the OECD, its informal sector ranges around 50%.¹⁵ The confinement order or recommendation by Covid-19 gives them two alternatives: stay home or not eat, since they earn only enough to buy food for the day. Hence, the risk of the pandemic is not the top priority for they most choose to follow their normal life and go out to earn a living. The government, of course, cannot compel them to respect the "Keep a Healthy Distance and Stay at Home" directive other than to let them go out to work because it cannot compel them to seclude themselves. In practice, they are considered part of the "essential activities" sector that allows certain sectors (banks, pharmacies, markets ...) to continue working.

As can be observed, the vast majority of the world's workers are deeply affected by the situation created by the pandemic and will be even more so when the pandemic recedes. Because the prevailing social system is based on the exploitation of workers, which can be clearly observed by the fact that the vast majority of them endure low wages, strenuous working hours, low qualifications and job instability / precariousness. These are conditions that make them extremely vulnerable in the current situation.

Meanwhile, others—particularly in the financial sector—make millions by capitalising on any window of opportunity, speculating on the stock market, buying distressed companies, or [laboratory shares that are expected to benefit from the pandemic](#). Others simply do great business with the resources necessary to deal with the pandemic.¹⁶

Financial capital puts billions into circulation to help companies and states face the situation.¹⁷ That means an exponential increase in the debt that, as always, the citizenry will pay by supporting new austerity policies. In other words, an increase in capitalist exploitation.

This health and economic crisis shows very clearly that when those who really create wealth (in industry, commerce and services) stop working and the general population consumes less, the economy is paralysed and the big capitalists also lose part of the profits obtained by exploiting the workers in production and looting the people in general in

¹⁵ ↪ Nicola Brandt: INFORMALITY IN MEXICO — ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT WORKING PAPER No. 896 OECD - 17-1—2011.

¹⁶ ↪ In April, a huge plane from China landed at a French airport with 150 tons of pollution protection material (chintraps, gloves, hats, blouses, etc.). It was not an order from the Government, but from a private company, whose name was not disclosed. "Business is business".

¹⁷ ↪ Gonzalo Fernández: [Vacuna urgente contra la Unión Europea](#), OMAL, 22 de abril de 2020.

consumption. But the situation of workers who lose part or all of their daily income, in most cases on the edge of poverty or extreme poverty, cannot be compared with that of the big capitalists who can lose thousands of millions without affecting in any way their obscene standard of living.

Rescuing the "Collective Wealth"

The paralysis of the economy has caused a strike (total or partial) of enormous proportions and the States have decided to mobilise financial resources to counteract its effects. In fact, the main beneficiaries of such resource mobilisation are large companies, so that their personnel can continue working. As they say, it is the company that "gives" work to employees and not, as it really happens, vice versa.

An example: One of the largest French companies in the commerce sector, FNAC DARTY, was the first to receive in April a loan of 500 million euros at 1% maximum annual interest for one year, extendable up to five in a pool of Banks with the State guarantee up to 70%. The company—in order to obtain the loan—had to commit not to distribute dividends in June and December 2020. FNAC DARTY invoiced in 2019 for 6 billion euros and registered a profit of just over 100 million euros that year, down relative to 2018 (150 million). In 2016 its then President, Mr. Bompard, (annual salary 200 thousand euros) received a bonus of 14 million euros. In the first quarter of 2020, FNAC DARTY had earnings of € 1.49 billion. Its direct sales decreased vertically but online sales increased 30% and most of its staff is partially unemployed. Its current president, Mr. Martínez, who receives an annual salary of 500,000 euros (41,000 per month), will reduce his salary by 25% ((375,000 annually, 31,000 per month) while the situation lasts. The company has almost no debts and in 2019 its financials registered a positive balance of 996 million euros. It is worth asking why this company—at a time when it is said that the effort must be shared by all—rich and poor - without exception, has been privileged by financial capital with the approval of the State. Perhaps the answer can be found in what—years ago—Galbraith wrote: *when it comes to helping the poor ... it is said that providing them with an income or aid of any kind will result in spoiling their behaviour, their sense of initiative and effort ... Just as the rich need the encouragement of more money, the poor need the encouragement of less money.* (John Kenneth Galbraith, *Voyage dans le temps économique*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, October 1995, p. 243¹⁸)

When this health and economic crisis is over, or rather when there is a pause until the next crisis,¹⁹ the health, economic and social damage caused by it will be revealed, just like after a tsunami. That the popular classes will pay with unemployment, a fall in real wages, an increase in the working day and a regression of the labour legislation.²⁰ In this way they will "put their shoulders" to rebuild and increase the "collective wealth", as some governments and employers' organisations have already postulated.

¹⁸ ↪ Fuentes: https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2020/04/20/coronavirus-fnac-darty-premiere-grande-entreprise-a-beneficier-d-un-pre-garanti-par-l-etat_6037150_3234.html; <http://www.fnacdarty.com/actualites-publications>; http://www.fnacdarty.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CP_Conditions-de-r%C3%A9mun%C3%A9ration-de-la-nouvelle-gouvernance.pdf; https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/04/19/500-millions-pour-fnac-darty-on-prete-mieux-aux-plus-riches_1785716; https://www.liberation.fr/futurs/2017/04/28/alexandre-bompard-un-pdg-a-14-millions-d-euros_1566175; <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2020/02/26/1991225/0/fr/Fnac-Darty-r%C3%A9sultats-annuels-2019.html>

¹⁹ ↪ As an effect of climate change, there may be a movement of vector insects of different viruses (dengue, zika, chikungunya) to other regions, which may be affected by new epidemics. Until now limited to the episodic contagion caused by some travelers.

²⁰ ↪ Mathilde Damgé et Maxime Vaudano: [Coronavirus: d'où viennent tous ces milliards des plans de relance?](#) Le Monde, 04/24/20

VI. Will there be social awareness of a radically unprecedented and innovative new paradigm?

Will this brutal manifestation of the ravages that capitalism²¹ causes serve for a massive process of awareness and will provoke a profound change in the system, as some think? We do not know. In any case, it will not happen if the cultural ideological hegemony does not change the playing field and in this way the great majority begin to understand that there are alternatives to capitalism and intend to actively participate in the construction and implementation of a project—utterly unprecedented and innovative—truly socialist and authentically democratic.



Useful links:

- The Jus Semper Global Alliance
- Alejandro Teitelbaum: [To Radically Change the Prevailing Social Order](#)
- Alejandro Teitelbaum: [The Progressively Accelerated Degradation of the Environment](#)
- Alejandro Teitelbaum: [Planetary Offensive Against Social Security](#)
- John Bellamy Foster: [The Long Ecological Revolution](#)
- John Bellamy Foster: [The Anthropocene Crisis](#)
- John Bellamy Foster: [Marxism and Ecology](#)
- Víctor Toledo: [What are we saying when we talk about sustainability?](#)
- Álvaro J. de Regil: [True Sustainability and Degrowth in the Citizens Imaginary](#)
- Adolfo Gilly & Rhina Roux: [Capitals, Technologies and the Realms of Life. The Dispossession of the Four Elements](#)

²¹ ↔ When the balance of this period is assessed, perhaps it will be possible to know who had the least failures in terms of foresight, reactivity and measures adopted in the face of the pandemic: will it be the Chinese authoritarian State, capitalism or the state of the rotten Western authoritarian democracy, the faithful executor of the designs of global private capital. Although in capitalist states it will also be necessary to make the difference between the different governments in matters of forecasting, reactivity and measures adopted and the reasons for such differences.

❖ **About Jus Semper:** The Jus Semper Global Alliance aims to contribute to achieving a sustainable ethos of social justice in the world, where all communities live in truly democratic environments that provide full enjoyment of human rights and sustainable living standards in accordance with human dignity. To accomplish this, it contributes to the liberalisation of the democratic institutions of society that have been captured by the owners of the market. With that purpose, it is devoted to research and analysis to provoke the awareness and critical thinking to generate ideas for a transformative vision to materialise the truly democratic and sustainable paradigm of People and Planet and NOT of the market.

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