A rise in humanity

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A rise in humanity is an idea I borrow to Frantz Fanon. Just around the decolonial period, he asks new decolonized countries not to imitate Europe, but to be creative and to carry the humanity at another level.

These last 5 centuries Europe had played a critical role in the dynamics of African, Asian and American countries (both north and south), by being a hegemonic power, shaping more or less the political, economic and cultural dynamics of these countries.

The question of the current relations between the three continents is an interesting one. Looking after the cultural potential of South-South relations, and the role that Europe plays, or can play, is one of the argument of this conference.
I wonder if interrogating the role of Europe in these dynamics isn't it continuing to give him a central role?

For me, the questions we are facing in the present are much more critical. The Challenges we have to face, **is to build a common world** by shifting our imaginaries and epistemologies

The present we are experiencing is shaped by a plurality of dynamics that interact at various levels. We live in a world that is driven by internal, external, local and global dynamics. Globalization of the neoliberal economy, climate change, issues of human mobility, technologies of information and communication. It

seems therefore that the present we are experiencing, in various part of this world, is somehow strange. The crises and multiples dystopia we are facing at a global level, make us feel that the world is a boat in dereliction.

Our postmodernity has become a time marked by **a future without promise** – except the one (promise) of avoiding the disasters it announces (ecological crises, growing insecurity, ethno-nationalism, racism, xenophobia, religious extremism, …). The only expectations that seem still operates are those of a technological future or of a post-humanist era.

A crucial challenge that the humanity face is the necessity **to protect the conditions of human life**. Our hand (with the help of technologies) has become so strong, and the impact of human activities on the biotope so harmful, that it is not being alarmist, to consider that human, by some of his actions, **put in danger the idea of the future**. This one has become uncertain.

Rising in humanity necessitate first to face the present and its challenges. Facing the present is looking deeply in it, clarifying the mechanisms that produce the current world we are experiencing. (economic, politic, relational, global dynamics). Making an effort of lucidity and intelligibility, but also finding the productive potentialities of the present and activating them.

Human beings and societies need to take ownership of their present and future and fill it with meanings. **How can we invent a regime of historicity that promote a rise in humanity without necessarily reactivating the myth of progress**?

My talk will explore some of these issues and propose paths to re-engage at a collective level the adventure of meanings.

Let me start by describing a local situation that take place in Niodior, an Island of Sine Saloum in Senegal. The place is blessed. Wild nature, fertile land, fishes in the sea, beaches, coconuts, sun, no cars and no pollution in the islands. Since 2000, the young boys of this islands are convinced that the only way for them to achieve their life is to migrate in Spain. They are fishermen (niominka), they know how to navigate in the Atlantic Ocean and most of time, they arrive safe on the Spanish's shores. They have left the schools, the fields of millet and the football playground. In the village, the high School population fell drastically year after year. The High School is now composed by 70 % by young girls. In a population of 8500 inhabitants, 1000 young boys have left the island this last decade. No arms to cultivate the fields, to fishes, no young boys to learn at High School. The economy and the demography, of the islands are shrinking. These islands are considered rich, because of their multiples resources (sea, fertile land, …) and people lives quite decently in that place for centuries. Globalization, standardization of desires and ways of life, a unique imaginary of modernity, has convinced these young boys that the life they are living is not valuable. We are not here in a situation of poverty or insecurity. All this mainly take place in the space of imaginaries.

The situation in Niodior is a metaphor of what can be witnessed in various places in Africa, Latin America, South Asia. Millions of people have been told in various ways, that the life there are living have no value. The have been convert by the desire of a way of life, that overconsumes the resources of the planet and have a huge impact on the environment. I am not taking here about the legitimate desire for security, freedom, well-being, discovering, travelling and experiencing the world of many people who migrate: but the mimetic desire of a way of live considered as modern, its power of attraction that put an important part of the African youth on the road of migration with all the danger we know, and the fact that by doing that, they leave spaces that they could vitalize, by their work and their creativity

A major characteristic of the advent of Western modernity, was the **promise** of a future defined by **progress** in all areas of social life. In this regime of historicity, the time to come was characterized by the promise of greater well-being. Despite undeniable improvement in terms of public liberties, technological advances and the modernization of social life, **the belief that the march of human history is one of continual progress has gradually collapsed**. The crises and the dystopias that have accompanied the reign of instrumental reason, ended up undermining the belief in a better tomorrow.

They have also led, in the West, to a relationship with time characterized by a hypertrophy of the present, which the historian François Hartog calls **presentism**.

The **presentism** is an overweighting of the time-modality of the present, that lower the past and the future in the experience of the density of time. Postmodernity is characterized by an excess of presentism. After the failure of the narratives that promised the advent of new times (communism, socialism, ...), a proclaimed end of all **Utopias,** seems to characterize our present moment

The question for us is which **Utopia can be builded or re-actived**. And probably more than Utopias, a change of episteme in the sense of Foucault is probably necessary or critical reflection on the episteme of the modernity (Reason, Order and progress) and its outcomes.

For societies of the Global South (Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America), considered as lagging behind the normal course of the world, this question of the present and the future poses itself somewhat differently. To them, promises of economic development, democracy and societal modernity to come, or to conquer are continuously made. Such retroactive teleologies reduce them to

societal mimicry, and enforce the myth of a linear course of history and progress.

For African nations, the question of thinking their destiny (their present and their future) is crucial – thinking it by mobilizing their mythological universes, their history, their cultural references, their symbolic resources. It is not about retreating into a singular identity or advocating for some imaginary purity. History shows that the dynamics and temporalities of societies are connected to others, in different scales: global, transnational, regional, local, which interpenetrate

it is about re-inventing one's world by also relying on existing dynamic cultural resources, and drawing vital elements from them. No future can be contemplated without a ground. Every society (culture or civilization) hands down a heritage and perpetuates a cultural matrix, while transforming it, according to the evolutions of the world.

Therefore, it is impossible to conceive a single history for all human societies. We must get out of a linear and progressive conceptions of History and a narrative, that condemns all other peoples of the world to follow the path of Euro-American societies, or engage in a mere repetition of it. If culture is a modality of the production of being, then we must admit **the multiplicity of collective ways of being and of societal forms of life**, the plurality of histories as well as *the possibility of several worlds within the world* (Baschet)

For Africans, to face the present and to respond to its challenges, its' necessary for them to re-invent the economic, the politic and the social forms, and to give birth to a new imagine community

But by the same time, we admit a co-presence of a plurality of worlds and historical trajectories, **our task is to inhabit the world and make it livable for all peoples and beings**. This could be the main objective **of a rise in humanity**

A new way of inhabiting the world, **is to base it on the production of qualitative relationships** between nations, actors, individuals, and with the nature. Shifting the episteme based on a mechanist order, that wants to be master and possessor of the nature, and the regime of beliefs and categories, based on a mythological universe of mastering, controlling, and exploiting is one of the most difficult task we have in this time.

Changing the imaginaries of progress, redefining values around witch the technical order (economy) are organized, and ground them, on social finalities, that we have collectively chosen, **is one of our major task.**

I want here to engage a conversation with Gilroy based on his Black Atlantic and his keynote of yesterday

In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy asked whether modern rationality legitimized the servitudes of the slave system (it helped to build) or whether it subverted them. If we observe the contemporary reign of instrumental reason and its pitfalls, it is not certain that modern reason has undertaken its own examination and self-criticism

The black Atlantic is a critical theory of modernity, that aims to disqualify any recourse in the field of Afro-diasporic studies, to a reified conception of identities. Gilroy shows that black cultural productions are transformed in the experiences of exile and relocation. The Atlantic, as a maritime universe, is a space of circulation that is not reduced to the commodification of goods and bodies, but also refers to the movement of translations of ideas, cultural and political practices.

In modern Europe, the notion of culture is based on a fundamentally racialized axiology. Gilroy criticizes a cultural axiology that produces an image of the Others (black) whose subtext is identity and nationality.

And this undermining of this cultural axiology work, requires the production of what he calls **intermediate concepts** (creolization, diasporas, syncretism). These concepts, make possible to account for a movement or mobility, that are not determined (produced) by a centralized pole.

Tracking the continuity of this axiology in our present time and pushing for its transformation, is one of our collective task

If we look at Europe not as a geography, by as a symbolic entity, grounded on its own consciousness of the role it plays in the world
It's seem to me that
Europe has not decided yet, to deeply change, its ways of relating with the countries of the so-called Global South; particularly, by consciously retreating from a hegemonic power position, **and engaging itself in building a common world**. Extractivism, cultural appropriation, asymmetric economics relations, autism, militarization of its borders, are some example of its contemporary way of relating with the Others (mainly the non-Europeans). The relations between Europe and the Global South are always marked by imbalances and asymmetries, even if we are living in a post-colonial period

The south-south relations have always existed in many domains, particularly in the cultural space. They could be deepened in many directions. The nations in the south of the globe, have a to learn from their respective experiences, and by doing this, enlarge the repertoire of solutions and archives to rely on, to face their challenges....

I am interested in Gilroy reflection around the ethics of antiphony that announces and prefigures new social relations that are not structured by domination.
One of our task is the creation of new common imaginaries

We can look at the musical archives as an archetype of the Black Atlantic culture, a place of cultural encounters. This point was so wisely highlighted by Gilroy yesterday in his keynote.
We can magnify music, and arts in general as productions of creolization of cultures, what is absolutely true. The encounters of human groups, no matter their circumstances (violent or pacific), most of the time, in their aftermath, enrich the human spirit and soul.

My point is that at the same time we are looking at the outcomes of the relations, and describing their complexity, we must continue to interrogate the ongoing nature of the relation.

The **notion of relation** is central in the production of life and society. This world we create is a result of multiples relations articulated at various level (nano, micro, macro), with various actors, and generating multiples interactions in a dynamic open system. **To be, is fundamentally being related**. Society, Nations, World, becoming a human, are the results of relations.

We are experiencing **a crisis of relationality**. Most of the time, We do not consider the relation a space of mutual fecundity, gain or nourishment; but as a war zone, a battlefield for extraction, plundering and agglomerating (material and symbolic resource) to each one. All the so called international relations (economics politics and social) are based on the principle of war, conquest, and the defense of one's private and exclusive interests.

A new way of living the world, **can be grounded one a production of qualitative relationships, as a new paradigm**. A Civilization

that is achieved, is the one who produce relations of quality between its components or members…. **This could be a way of rising in humanity.**
It is possible to build a relational economy that is nourishing for a larger number of people. It's already the case in the nature, and in various domains of our social life where the cooperative process dominates the competitive one and sustain life

For a rise in humanity the utopia we can build or re-activated is the one of **considering the world as a space we share**, with the idea of co-ownership of beings. Building not only a human society at a global scale, but a **society of beings** that recognize all its members by enlarging the notion of community to the foreigners, to the animal species, the vegetal, to the ancestors, to the earth (Alma Mater); and also, to the ones who are not yet born (idea of transgenerational responsibility, the rights of the future generations…). This enlarged notion of society necessitate to rethink the notion of the same, the alterity, the feelings and narratives of belonging. For that purpose, we need to widen the vision of politics and rethink our way of living the world.

To achieve a qualitative civilization including all beings. Working to access to a psychology that lead us to live the world in a non-devastating perspective. For that purpose, it's necessary to deeply renew the imaginaries of the relations we establish with the beings, and the entities we are living with. Cohabitate with nature (vivant) by respecting its cycles and rhythms. Not considering the nature, only as a resource that we exploit, but as the place that shelter us and offer us life, also as an infinite library from which we learn. From the plane to the submarine a lot of technological advancement are the result of biomimetism, and a precise and fine observation of the mechanism that take place in the nature. Our humanization process is unachieved, **a progress in quality of relations we produce,** is a next step that can be considered as a rise in humanity ….

The resources of the planet, it's cognitive and cultural capital are common good produced by the human experience in its totality. The simple fact of being human should allow to access and benefit from this common patrimony. The reflections around the idea of a universal minimum income, are based on this principle. Every human being should have access to resources that ensures his dignity, on the simple basis of his belonging to the humanity

We could consider a global management of issues related to basics necessities of life: education, health, feeding people. It is technically possible. The last globalization has produced transnational actors that already operates at a transnational level (scale) but mostly for private interests. A lot of human activities, circulation of information, goods and services are now de-territorialize. **Sanitary and climate risks and most of societies questions, are also transnational; but we continue to consider them and manage them in the space of the nation-state**. The treatment of political and juridical questions of our time is in dephasing with our reality

We have a challenge of a perspective and scale. How to consider and to reflect on the social dynamics at the right scale.

Every social, political, historical and economic order is **sustained and reproduce by an epistemological order**. This one regulates the understanding of the world and the subjectivities. Changing the paradigms and the epistemic order on which we ground our behaviors is a necessity. In order to imagine and construct different present and future.

It is possible **to create a world citizenship** in addition to our national citizenship and which will ensure the fundamental human rights to each human being. The migrants could benefit from this world citizenships. The humanity is one and plural, and

politic is the art of the management of this plurality. Life can only be achieved in the middle of humans at the condition of being recognized and accepted by them. The **recognition and its consequences that are care and reciprocity**, can be guaranteed by this global citizenship

Living the world is considering oneself as belonging to a wider space than one's ethnic group, one's nation, the continent where we are born, those who have the same colour of eyes than you or the same level of wealth.

It's fully inhabiting histories and cultures of humanity, its geographies, wearing its multiples faces and being depositary of the legacies of its plural cultures. For this to happen, it is necessary to operate a work in the space of the language and get rid of the private appropriation of spaces, places and common patrimony, that operate in our daily language. We need to produce a lexicon of the common world, to escape the fragmented version of the world we are experiencing..

How to deal with the violence of our world? Dreaming of a space free of conflicts is probably an angelic vision of human relations. But we can, as a rise in humanity, improve the mechanism of the management of these conflicts. We produce too much non-necessary and non-productive violence in our social relations. This violence is related to the production at a large scale of condition of human indignity; to our collective psyche deeply structure by the idea of violent competition, to our conception of a punitive and no transitional justice, to the low value we give to the moral and physical integrity of the others, to our des-identification to the others, to an habituation to violence and the form of de-sensitization that it produces; to its fermentation and it's ebullition in our daily language. To put a distance between the various forms of violence and us. it's necessary to understand its complex roots, to sterilize it soils (when it's

possible…), but also to face him firmly, when it wear the dress of a destructive nihilism

Rising in humanity, it's also asking to oneself: **with my actions which type world am I contributing to**? Did my gesture, reproduce the conditions of iniquity, domination and devastation or contribute to make this world more flourishing, more open and more livable.