

THE ETHICS OF CARE IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION*

Albert Llorca Arimany**

Abstract

The issues that a public administration needs to address lie within the field of humanisation or ethical reciprocity, taking into account the human subject. The administration must therefore act for the benefit of the citizen, averting the ever-present risk of bureaucratisation. The basic question is: what can we expect from the public administration? What is most crucial here is its educational or personalising nature, which entails the use of human qualities, such as acting with humility, respecting the citizens and fulfilling their basic rights. The notion of *cultural conatus* provides the guiding light in our research: to remain attentive. Today, the commitment of any public administration is guided by the agreement and consensus of the citizenry, beyond the limits of the state in which it operates. At European level, this makes the task not easier, but rather more difficult; however, the elimination of all bureaucratism in the European Union is both a praxis and a hope.

Key words: care; citizenry; ethical reciprocity; attention; civic education; bureaucratisation; European Union; *cultural conatus*.

L'ÈTICA DE LA CURA A L'ADMINISTRACIÓ PÚBLICA

Resum

Els temes que una administració pública ha d'abordar s'inscriuen en la línia de la humanització o reciprocitat ètica, atenent al subjecte humà. Ha d'actuar, doncs, en bé del ciutadà, evitant el risc de la burocratització, sempre present. La pregunta de fons és: què podem esperar de l'Administració pública? I el més elemental és el tarannà educador o personalitzador, que implica desplegar qualitats humanes, com la humilitat d'actuació de l'Administració pública, el respecte als ciutadans i la satisfacció de llurs drets bàsics. La noció de conatus cultural ens orienta en la nostra investigació: romandre atents. Avui el compromís de tota administració pública es dirigeix per l'acord i el consens de la ciutadania arreu, més enllà dels límits de l'estat on roman. En l'àmbit europeu, això fa la tasca no més fàcil, sinó més difícil, però la supressió de tot burocratisme a la Unió Europea és una praxi i una esperança.

Paraules clau: cura; ciutadania; reciprocitat ètica; atenció; educació cívica; burocratització; Unió Europea; conatus cultural.

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** Albert Llorca Arimany, president of the Institut Emmanuel Mounier de Catalunya since 2015 and promotor/coordinator of the personalist philosophy research group of the Catalan Philosophy Society (Contemporary Philosophy Section), affiliated with the Institute for Catalan Studies. Faculty of Philosophy of Ramon Llull University, c. de la Diputació, 231, 08007 Barcelona. albert.llorca.arimany@gmail.com.

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Contents

- 1 What does *to take care of* mean?
 - 2 The horizon within which the public administration must operate
 - 2.1 The praxis of the proto-ethical categories
 - 2.2 Civic education and the *cultural conatus*
 - 2.3 The state that must protect a public administration of a community of citizens with rights
 - 3 The state and European administration. The problems of European states
 - 3.1 The place of the state in the European Union of today
 - 3.2 The European problems that do not go away
- By way of epilogue
- References

1 What does *to take care of* mean?¹

The problems to be solved by a public administration must be polarised to help the persons or human subjects that are citizens thereof; in other words, human beings that are not only individuals, but who exist and live in a relationship with others and with the administrative structure that presides over their present and future decisions and actions. These actions range from paying taxes to requesting any aid that they may need in terms of health, financial, employment (right now the temporary employment regulation files or ERTO by its acronym in Catalan, the promotion of teleworking or the requests for long-term illness benefits), education, housing (a current problem that is becoming ever more pressing), etc.

Put simply, the public administration is that which, using its competences, makes and manages the state. However, it is not the state itself and, obviously, even less so any form of ideology within a state, governing party or the like.²

And what does it mean that the public administration *takes care of* people or citizens? It means that its public or common praxis obliges it to act for the benefit of the citizens³ insofar as they are the administered subjects. More specifically, taking care of citizens is not only taking care of their psychological deficiencies,⁴ given the fact that the inclusion of psychology in the field of administration has entailed discrepancies, as it insinuates itself into the life of future administered citizens and their freedom, since the former controls the stimuli received by the latter.

We should therefore ask ourselves what *to take care of* actually means. Theologist Josefa Torres has made a statement that can guide us in this search: *to take care of* or *to care for* means to *attend to*⁵ the life and health of everyone and look after their well-being, and the rational justification lies in *solving* the basic human needs, to which there are two aspects: vulnerability and dependency on others. Currently, both the most basic psychology and common sense dictate that it is the family that is primarily involved in meeting human needs: but the family does, in turn, require appropriate help. Furthermore, there are obviously different levels to the public administration and these need to be coordinated, starting with the local level, to improve people's everyday lives and overcome any subjective feeling of administrative mistreatment on the part of those being administered.

And here we find again the needs of all citizens, placed in the *public forum*, where the notion of *citizenship* turns into one of public *careship*⁶. And some concepts become intermingled, because aspects such as consumption, progress or feeling oneself fairly treated by the administration run the risk of commercialisation by accentuating more the market economy than the *economy of the gift*,⁷ leading said *attention* along the road towards the indefinite exploitation of supposedly endless natural resources.⁸ And a humanly viable public

1 The *Diccionari de la llengua catalana* (Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1995) understands "care" (*cura*) as looking out for someone's best interests and well-being (*l'atenció a vetllar pel bé o bon estat d'algu*) and "to take care of" (*curar*) as taking responsibility for, think and propose it (*ocupar-se'n, pensar i proposar-s'ho*).

2 This is a problem that no longer exists in genuinely democratic states today, except in those that are not, where civil servants act in accordance with the designs of the governing politicians. Dahlström and Lapuente, in their book *Organizando el Leviatán*, affirm that the perils of bureaucracy and the corruption of public servants in the administration go in the same direction. They claim that a highly politicised bureaucracy – or the opposite, excessively bureaucratized politics – lead to the withering away of public life, no matter how many regulatory laws may be established.

3 Using its structures and regulations and offering citizens whatever help they need.

4 In her book *Saving the Modern Soul*, Eva Illouz speaks of the introduction of psychology (scientific psychology, obviously) in the US administration in the 1920s, with the use of tests to assess the suitability of future members of the postal service, police, armed forces, etc.

5 The term *attend to* is a complex one in philosophical language, which we shall turn to later on. Let us simply say here that the word is highly redolent of non-instrumental, non-hierarchised and non-objectifying rationality (cf. the criticism of the Frankfurt School), and these are criteria of *human cooperation*.

6 The word is an invention of other thinkers, which can also be translated into English by a hypothetical derivative of *care*. But the use of this word is exclusively due to the public nuance of *caring for* or *taking care of*.

7 In, for example, the sense of *cooperation* employed by Paul Ricoeur in his book *Amour et justice* (and not merely of *competitiveness*, inherent in the capitalist market).

8 An approach flatly rejected by bioeconomists and ecologists, from Georgescu Roegen to Fernando Valladares, who recently stated

administration, distanced from this obsession, would have its priorities clearly focused on acting for and on behalf of the persons making it up.⁹ This is the job we shall attempt to do in this paper, which inevitably encompasses an in-depth examination of the ethical and psychological aspects of the human being. Such an analysis should help us outline what will be a sort of key proto-ethical categorisation of the entirety of the *ethics of care* in human action, and obviously in the actions of the public administration. So, without further ado, let's get started.

The above introductory words on *care* allow us, from a personalist anthropological standpoint, to embark upon said categorisation, thereby laying the groundwork for the drawing up of an ethical praxis to be implemented.

The preliminary and fundamental ethical question in this matter will therefore be not what is right to achieve the goal pursued—which is always debatable—, and which would lead us into a world of psychophysical and psychological conditioning factors that would distance us from our commitment to the public administration. Rather, we should ask ourselves how we should act, something that is achievable in three stages: what and how we act, what we can actually do and what is the degree of achievement of what we want to obtain.¹⁰

The first question deals with ethical sensibilities, but the three stages that form its backbone are inextricably intertwined with the associated determinant psychophysical and cultural factors. Therefore, we believe that a psycho-anthropological human description leads to an ethically valuable commitment.

The proposed threefold proto-ethical categorisation will tell us about essential human structures, which we shall dub *eidetic-practical* (how we act), *para-ethical* (what we can do) and *supra-ethical* (associated with what we can expect).

What is the specific function of each level or type of question? The first category, which we will also call *pre-ethical*, will serve to accompany an ethical discourse and will provide it with arguments, with notions such as freedom, the sense of imputability and responsibility (so that no cracks appear in mental and human solidity), motivation, intersubjectivity and the decision-making capacity of all human beings, and all these arguments will be the means through which the person-citizen grows.

The second category, *para-ethical*, helps remind us of the limitations of human action and deals with the choices made in given circumstances, where passions, emotions and prejudices may well prevail over reason. Here, the key concepts that will impact upon the actions of the public administration are respect for the positions of others and the obligation that must be felt to enable the rights of the other. This category should help overcome the obstacles and anxieties arising from natural chaos and human distrust in the public administration.

The third category, *supra-ethical*, deals with guiding what we do to bolster and achieve what we aspire to and wish to achieve, such as a reasonable meaning to life, religious or ideological hope, a certain way of living, aspirations or allegiance to a community, etc.

It is difficult to speak of *care* without these three psycho-anthropological levels. It is true that these psycho-anthropological qualities are not (strictly speaking) ethical, but, without them, *the ethics of care* would be bare. Thus, ethics can be seen as praxis-related reflection that puts into play all the aforementioned proto-ethical

that “we need an economy that takes into account the fact the Earth’s resources are finite” (interview in newspaper *La Vanguardia*, 5 November 2019), an assertion that runs contrary to the capitalist available resources cost calculation. (Translated from the original in Spanish).

⁹ We have used the word *person* four times—and not by chance—to refer to the human subject of the actions of the public administration, and we should add that our personalist convictions make us think of persons and not of individuals (even though the *process of individualisation* has some unavoidable psychological requirements). We define a person within a *process of personalisation*—compatible with the notion of *public administration*—as a being aware of themselves and of their links, which *oblige* them to be in a certain way, with dignity: from the consideration of the *personhood* of every single person and their self-overcoming of themselves in addressing others, by means of the administrative organisation underpinned by the state. Human dignity would thus entail recognition of every single person—each citizen—by the public administration, which is the party charged with enforcing said dignity in justice-related ethical-political terms.

¹⁰ These three questions sum up the relevant focus within the public administration, of civil servants and citizens (as for its philosophical foundations, we would find our thesis in Albert Llorca, *De l'Eidètica pràctica a l'hermenèutica en el pensament de Paul Ricoeur*).

structures. And this anthropological-psycho-ethical sphere calls for a dual motivation: the good of the person (the administered citizen), and their educative shaping, and it is this latter that is the catalyst for embarking upon the development of the former.¹¹

2 The horizon within which the public administration must operate

2.1 The praxis of the proto-ethical categories

We shall use these categories to tackle the *educational-humanising dimension*, inherent in the growth of the person-citizen, which Emmanuel Mounier named *personalisation*, in order to undertake the challenge of the *ethics of care* and its application in the public administration.

From the standpoint of these categories, the ethics of care describes the personal self as one who must be master of oneself and who knows how to position oneself before the world and before others, without being absorbed by the culture (here, the public administration and the state upon which it depends) in which one lives.

a) In the case of the *pre-ethical* sphere, its educative role must speak of the sense of humility, on the basis of the affirmation of the intentional and open personal self, which feels responsible and not diluted by the surrounding environment (by satisfactions, fears, appearances, narcissisms, etc.) and of a consensus-seeking attitude as a core factor of the public administration, because the other —citizen— must be listened to and respected, satisfying their needs and rights.

b) With regard to the educative aspect of the *para-ethical* category, it is worth highlighting the need and wish to live with others under the public administration on the basis of a recognition of one's own limits and weaknesses. This involves placing the emphasis on our own obligations and responsibilities, taking on board human difficulties, in that we are fragile beings, inconsistent with our very selves, often overcome by the inertia of customs coming from outside of ourselves. This means, in educative-administrative terms, that we have to overcome ourselves, we must foster improvements in human communications and become socially and historically engaged in a public cause that is not determinant and imperfect, and do so in the aim of humanisation. In short, it means overcoming our finite nature and making ourselves capable of regarding the other beyond our own personal interests. At play here are the universality of every single person in the public administration and intracultural sharable values.

c) Turning to the educative aspect of the *supra-ethical* category, it must be said that public educative praxis will aim to foster a European and planetary awareness of human problems with repercussions on the economy, on the organisation of work, on a range of rights, on respect for the environment, etc.¹² It is clear that sharing ethical values is extremely important. The human educative function at the supra-ethical level with regard to the public administration sets out the possibilities and goals with which we orient ourselves around the key ethical question of “how should we act?”, in other words, how we should behave in the place where we stand, on the clear understanding that others have preceded us and left their legacy.

The educative manifestation of this supra-ethical category arises in the redefining of the personal self of each person in terms of the degree of satisfaction with oneself with regard to others. Have we tried as hard as we could? Are we happy with ourselves? Were we able to use our freedom? In the end, it is a question of whether we have been able to to reappropriate our very selves. And constancy (the second supra-ethical category) asks us: have we held dear the sense of truth in our life? Have we been tenacious in the cause of humanising the world that surrounds us, or have we given up in the face of the first difficulties?¹³ The issue of post-truth

11 This will be possible in what we shall call *cultural conatus* or reflexion aimed at universalisation, which emerges from within the embodied and/or contextualised human being.

12 This is the civic attitude, one that is quite lacking in our context, according to public management professors Carles Ramió (UPF) and Marc Esteve (ESADE).

13 This is an important point: the measure of *going with the flow* or accommodative yielding makes itself felt here. Faithfulness to shareable values is not always gratifying, and this is something that needs to be learned. Socrates stated that he was a good friend to his friends, but a better friend to the truth, and this is something that is not easy to keep up.

comes out here. As Daniel Innerarity noted regarding the problem of COVID-19,¹⁴ we are not dealing with a contagion, but with a *contagious society*, meaning that we are living in a society that demands protections that we do not receive.

The fact is that what used to protect us no longer does: we are living at a time of uncertainty in the involvement of the state —one could say the public administration— and the only thing that can protect us is shared knowledge based on cooperation and not on competitiveness. The fight that broke out in the autumn of 2020 to secure a COVID-19 vaccine before anyone else, more for economic and prestige-related reasons than humanitarian ones, was not an exemplary situation. A fight egged on, in an odd combination, by the usual social networks (WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) and the administration of the state, which now exists under the shadow of post-truth.¹⁵

The third supra-ethical category is trust in humanising plenitude highlighted in the transfinite attitude of human communication on a planetary scale. From an educational perspective, this entails subservience to the common good, instead of that of the common good to individual interests. And, with regard to the sense of truth, it points to the need to be receptive to other subjects and to nature. To sum up, it means the implementation of a civic/utopic attitude that is essential in all public administrations, which will allow us to understand each other and improve ourselves in a human sense.¹⁶ In terms of the law, the Spanish Constitution of 1978 states: “The public Administration serves the general interest with objectivity and acts in accordance with the principles of efficiency, hierarchy, decentralisation, deconcentration and coordination, being fully subject to justice and the law”.

2.2 Civic education and the *cultural conatus*

Of the many things that can be said about the level of civic-mindedness that arises from the *care for the human person* in the public administration, there is one thinker, Lluís Cuéllar,¹⁷ who, with his notion of *attentiveness* (*atentivitat*), provides us with an in-depth look at the aforementioned *care of the person*. Broadly speaking, this philosopher argues that:

- Attentiveness provides a philosophical effort, from his phenomenological standpoint, towards the truth in terms of installing ourselves in the world, and we are there in a *place of gifts* that offers us this access to the truth, given in two phases: initiating us into it and guiding us with regard to it. Attentiveness thus offers us a boost in our life to help us understand the *gift* in it.

- Access to the truth is a real process and not some kind of invention, so that only from the existential self (vital and intellectual) can we/aspire to truth and decisively live it. We can already catch a glimpse here of how this notion of *truth* is not a comfortable one for us humans, as it leaves no room for inhuman *masking*.

- Thirdly, one could say that the truth we discover within ourselves *imposes itself upon us*, overcomes us, reminding us of that third level of existence that Czech philosopher Jan Patočka described as *living in truth* (and that he would also describe as *living a life exposed*), and which we could translate, in Cuéllar’s terms, as *living attentive to the truth*.¹⁸

14 We base these remarks on some articles on COVID-19 by the philosopher published in several newspapers between March and December 2020. Of these latter, cf. “Pandemia sin verdad” (4 December 2020).

15 “One factor that could explain our relative failure to manage this crisis is the installation of a post-truth culture in contemporary social life” (“Pandemia sin verdad”) (translated from the original in Spanish), quite the opposite to what the meaning of truth would indicate: that, in a pandemic, governing public spaces is complicated, perhaps because what is public begins in the private sphere, like washing one’s hands, which has become a responsible act in the public interest.

16 Relevant here are the contributions made by authors such as R. Kane Appiah, Bhikhu Parekh, Lluís Cuéllar and Paul Ricoeur.

17 Lluís Cuéllar i Bassols was a personalist and Catholic thinker positioned between Augustinian thought and Husserlian phenomenology. Born in the Catalan town of Olot in 1925 and dying in Barcelona in 1993, he was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Barcelona and, in 1981, founded the Liceu Joan Maragall de Filosofia (Joan Maragall Lyceum of Philosophy), part of the Ateneu Barcelonès. His most important work, his doctoral thesis, dates from 1980 and is entitled *El hombre y la verdad* (Ed. Herder).

18 *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

In these thoughts offered by Cuéllar, it is difficult not to glimpse a sense of *personalist commitment* or an undertaking to a lifestyle to which truth commits us. And this commitment in practical life stems from what he calls an *attentive attitude* before the key evidence¹⁹ that makes the truth tell us of our finite self as a kind of *advance notice* prior to any judicative act.

It is worth noting the applicability of such analyses in the field of the public administration as a civic extension of a state respectful of its citizens: this would be in the form of the aforementioned transition from *citizenship* to *careship*, which, for personalism, means a humanising attribute of human beings as a process of personalisation in which everyone is and feels *with* the others (fraternity) and *as* the others (equality of rights). Now, the patterns of domination are questioned, since indifference and desensitisation to others provide no good basis for relations. The notion of *careship* as a public asset of administration requires an attentiveness that deals with nature, the economy or politics in terms of persons and not of systems, in the Mounierian sense.

The preceding observations provide us with the guidelines to address the scope of our expression of *cultural conatus* in public life. In the framework in which we find ourselves, it is that of the relevant attentiveness and care in the public administration, and the indifference and distancing between persons are the obstacles to the first two notions. The *cultural conatus* is given the role of promoting attentiveness and leading towards care.

It is a matter of fostering attentiveness, as we have said, and of quelling the indifference that would happen to us if the *cultural conatus* were forgotten. And both things at the same time contribute to the praxis of human rights. What shall we understand, then, by *cultural conatus*, how is it implemented and how does it affect human beings?

To answer the first question, the *cultural conatus* is a perspective (philosophically speaking, a hermeneutic) by means of which one takes an in-depth look at the meaning of truth by means of intuitive-conative philosophical thought from the standpoint of an always shareable historic-cultural singularity. As for its implementation, the fundamental usefulness lies in the ability it confers to counter any indifference (a cursed word for the personalist ear, and we fear that also for every public administration), as if it awoke the community-related and civic dimension of the person. Lastly, regarding the effects it has upon the protection of human rights, the *cultural conatus* affects the praxis of human rights in that it deploys ethical values—or virtues—such as tolerance, fraternity, respect, forgiveness and justice, which are crucial to being able to recognise and assert such a civic dimension. And these values can be discovered by overcoming said indifference, the instrumentalisation of human beings and their condescension in public indecency, such as the institutionalisation of corruption.

If the core nature of the *cultural conatus* allows us to overcome practical nihilism, its implementation and effectiveness in the public administration must be placed in front of ethnic unrest and public disaffection. The inclination towards an unwillingness to understand and towards mistreating the citizens-administered parties in public life is well-known, and quite the contrary to what Hannah Arendt called the *ability to want to live together*.²⁰ If the acts of public policy embark upon this road, violations and not consensus will be the rule, and we would then be faced with a state that unceremoniously proclaims the obedience of the citizenry. One example of this would be unconditionally demanding sovereign unity, entrusting its stability not to shared power but rather to the power-strength (as Paul Ricoeur himself would say, to advocate a linkage of human rights between the desire for power and the desire for justice).²¹

19 Later, Cuéllar states that truth has a therapeutic or purifying aspect to it, and that, as a result of the *epokhé* or *reduction* of Husserlian philosophy, he more specifically details what he calls *verocentrisme* (truth-centricity), which “consists in acknowledging the complete subordination that the self needs to have ‘to that which is and which must be’ in the field of one’s own life” (ibid.). (Translated from the original in Spanish).

20 Arendt, Hannah (2005). *Sobre la violencia*. Alianza Editorial (p. 70). We must add that this concept of *wanting to live together* as a cohesive element in a human community is shared by other thinkers such as Paul Ricoeur, Michel Gauchet and Pierre Rosanvallon. Daniel Innerarity recently noted that “Pierre Rosanvallon points to the pluralisation of the old will of the people [...] towards a deconcentration of sovereignty, which is diversifying across times, instances, levels and functions”, *Elogio del enredo europeo* (May 2019; translated from the original in Spanish). We will state that, although the *cultural conatus* has no political pretences, it is a thought with universalising aim that springs up within the human being, as an intuitive process within any cultural context, and we would hold that the desire for truth and justice (or exercising of civic consensus), coexisting in a community, is the key attitude of the administration in a state that sets itself the task of serving the community of persons. Put succinctly, the public administration is found within the bounds of a triangle, whose sides are parties’ ideologies, the judiciary and citizens/administered parties.

21 One could say that he advocates a move from *potestas* (or the model of a state that enforces obedience) to *potentia* (or the

2.3 The state that must protect a public administration of a community of citizens with rights

Let us deal with the concept of the state that lies behind and permeates through the public administration we are describing. It is clear that our political history—that of Spain and that of Europe as a whole— has been marked by two schools of thought very much set in their ways: the Machiavellian and the Hegelian. As a result, power is *potestas* or rule that must be organised (with the French Revolution providing a great example of this) to establish the dependence of citizens' rights on of the state.

In the joint declaration of the Spanish and Catalan governments one year after the banned referendum of 1 October 2017,²² it was stated that there was a conflict regarding the future between the Spanish State and the Generalitat of Catalonia and that they were committed to dialogue²³ despite their discrepancies over the origin, nature and potential solutions to the issue: dialogue had to be pursued as a democratic response to the demands of the Catalan people, within the framework of legal certainty. This was a good declaration of intent that, regardless of the different opinions, asserted the path of dialogue rather than legal impunity and a lack of public civic-mindedness.

In terms of institutional consolidation, what is the role that should be assumed by a state that regards itself as affronted? In a mature state, it would seem that it should be able to provide options and not to punish from the outset. It may, for example, issue pardons in the case of a final judgement it regards as disproportionately harsh or unequitable—from the Latin *aequitas*, a translation of the Greek *epieikeia*— and leave things in the hands of the implementation of the criterion of impartiality by the justice system, in accordance with the circumstances of the given case. This is not an administrative issue—the judiciary does not form part of the public administration—but it must be implemented in accordance with protocols and without violating them.

Such considerations arise when dealing with a sensitive political issue, and one may wonder with a degree of scepticism whether the current batch of politicians—government and opposition alike— have the skillset to shape a scenario of peace dialogue with their opponents. We are back to the *organisation of the Leviathan*.

There is a somewhat inelegant word that perfectly encapsulates the attitude of some in the government and the higher echelons of the law: impunity.²⁴ It can be seen that such a notion becomes viable if arising within the context of a state that is dominant, as that designed by Hegel or, more recently Max Weber. In other words, the state in the sense of a *sittlichkeit* according to Hegel—translatable as *ethical order*— whereby a the human person as a citizen is subjected to the superior entity or state, which shall have decision-making power over the citizenry in the name of the common good. Nowadays, in these times of a hard-to-control pandemic, this common good must, we believe, refer to health and climate-related justice, which would (for us) form a significant part of anamnestic justice, concerned with what has been done in the past. The unpalatable truth of the matter is that we are living in a society used by political parties that spread ideas of freedom and equality

common action of the citizenry, which prefers justice over power).

22 The joint declaration by the two governments, of 21 December 2018, is included in the full text of the communiqué issued by Presidents Pedro Sánchez and Quim Torra after their meeting in Barcelona (*La Vanguardia*, 22 December 2018).

23 Dialogue: this is the key word. But what does it mean? Broadly, we can say that dialogue will be possible if three basic facts are acknowledged:

- That one must acknowledge, listen to and respect, most particularly the weaker party: in other words, overcome any attitude of supremacy and, in short, pride.
- There is a need to institutionalise dialogue and rein in any desire to provoke or dominate the different other.
- That to dialogue is the diametric opposite to humiliate, and a precondition for it is understanding the other since; the more we know about them, the more difficult it becomes to attack them.

In short, dialogue means that the two parties in dispute must be able to compromise, which is not the same thing as selling out.

24 *Impunity* can be understood as the corrupt abuse of the exercise of power by the state or an individual with no possible punishment, be this in the form of corruption contrary to the law or in accordance with the law. I will be using the word here in its second sense and when practised by the state. Included within said definitions are acts as different as civil servants lying about people in medical tribunals (so as not to grant them benefits), vast state programmes to prop up self-serving financial institutions or the abusive conduct of the state's security bodies and forces (which are part of the administration) against the citizenry in a part of the territory under their legal control.

as it suits them, fostering facile beliefs/prejudices that give rise to hatred and violence, if they can be leveraged to the benefit of their own power. One could say that ideology has been imposed upon the administration.

We should also consider the *mediocrity of power*²⁵. The thinker Pino Aprile spoke of the *acritical imbecility* as the *controller of the herd*, by means of which the mass of citizens is used by an intolerant bureaucracy, insensitive to the sufferings of the citizenry. What is most terrifying is how, as the Italian author points out, if it were not so, there would be a catastrophic collapse in social order.²⁶ What matters here is what we shall dare to call *the sovereignty of institutional stupidity* upheld by certain political parties and the social classes that support them, something that is not easy to overcome due to bureaucratic inertia.²⁷ Whatever the case, a relevant aspect in this matter is that of respect, which would constitute the compassionate requirement with regard to the other, since any difficulties he or she encounters are also *my problem*. Justice, the foundation for all compassion, is equanimous or it is not just. The duty of the state is therefore to ensure that it acts as an administrative tool to expand the meaning of *citizenship* to embrace *careship*, because it has the capacity to establish and administer laws and wields monopolistic power to help citizens to live well together: linking together the good of each individual person with acceptance of the laws that guarantee peaceful coexistence. In this delicate task, the state relies on *ethical reciprocity* and, accordingly, on the efforts to make justice flourish, which is, naturally, justice for all.

Facing economic and political problems by a *state-administration* that does not neglect fraternity requires, on the part of both the governing and governed parties, an indispensable degree of civic education and sense of what is good for others in the management of public life:²⁸ in other words, of good public administration. The field of civic-mindedness is one which the state cannot afford to ignore: the government's civic and educative responsibility means it must foster and practice what it preaches to provide an example of the praxis of fraternity. The current coronavirus crisis requires, more than ever, knowing how to *walk the path together*. The fact is that civic-mindedness is closely linked with the notion of fraternity, because the latter is the anticipatory symbolic construct of peaceful coexistence, without which any trust or hope deposited in a community would be mere banality, typical of a society ruled by a great degree of civic annihilation, making it more than clear that any social agreements would be pointless and absurd.

If civic-mindedness inspires trust, it provides security and the ability to overcome fears on the basis of *conative joy*, or an intuitive collective momentum²⁹, forgetting any political or economic interests or sectarian bias. It then engages the action of every citizen in the community. At some point, we will have to consider that “to be responsible will be to anticipate what may happen based on what we will do..., insofar as action mobilises things and people, so that it transforms the situation by educating, improving the environment or not”.³⁰

One of the categories of this arduous task of promoting fraternity is that of *practical wisdom*, an expression coined years ago by Paul Ricoeur, which we would say constitutes the praxico-reflexive figure that rehumanises

25 Aprile, Pino (2002). *El elogio del imbécil* (Originally in Italian: *Elogio dell'imbecille*). Aprile states that “if social organisation works, there is no possibility of error: it is tailor the cretin (and of whoever is at its head)” (p. 135; translated from the original in Spanish). These days, the talk is of the risk of being too cultured, rather than too powerful: “¿Puede ser peligroso un número excesivo de personas inteligentes?” (Can too many brainy people be a dangerous thing?) (*The Economist. La Vanguardia*, 30 October 2020).

26 Aprile, Pino, *op. cit.*, p. 115-128.

27 A *disease* —*leprosy*, as Simone Weil put it— that spreads and propagates through the hierarchy of power. The dominance of bureaucracy is a kind of small-mindedness or stupidity that is proliferating and gaining social influence, and which Pino Aprile summarises as *imbecility*.

28 Generally speaking, the public administration is at odds with power as a tendency or human —as Nietzsche would say, “human, all too human” —inertia, and thus with *legalisation* in any democratic state.

Peter Drucker, the famous 20th-century administration philosopher, stated, in his 1993 *Wall Street Journal* article “Six Rules for Presidents” that whoever became President would have to understand that, amongst said basic rules, they should not ever bet on a sure thing, they must not stubbornly do what they want to do, and that they need to look after people. Today, this is assuredly truer than ever: nothing is sure, there is fear and we have to take heed of the past, because it informs us with regard to a number of current decisions.

29 Llorca, Albert (2013). “Triangulacions Hermenéutiques Postmodernes”. *Calidoscopi*, Issue 31. Here again, I make reference to the *cultural conatus*.

30 Llorca, Albert (2013). “La responsabilitat: atenció a la persona i compromís en ser just”. *Calidoscopi*, Issue 33. (Translated from the original in Catalan.)

the human person, making it more aware of interpersonal relations, heaving these relations into the view of the institutions, and that proposes proper management of rights in difficult and conflictive situations. We believe that the public administration should act in this direction.

Accordingly, Ricoeurian *practical wisdom* is to be applied in a number of fields —politics being one of them, amongst others— to overcome human difficulties and conflicts (to which we can now add the pandemic, also dubbed a *syndemic*, due to the complexity of the issues it entails) and, in its public version, it will put pressure on those political decisions whose core concern is how the law is applied in certain circumstances and which always affects people.³¹

So, in short, *practical wisdom* provides the basis for the imputability (“it is I who...”) and the responsibility of both those governed and those governing, in the present and with regards to the past and future. From the standpoint of practical wisdom, one would say that the state is not the guiding force behind the historical developments in society, nor does it have the right to act as such. The opposite to this conviction would place us in the field of *political monism* (which is not appropriate to address now), which would speak more of the poverty of human conception and of its implementations.

What should we do, then? This is always an uncomfortable but essential question, which, to different degrees, some thinkers have attempted to answer in their own particular way and from their own particular standpoint (Rosenzweig, Arendt, Fromm, Patočka, Gauchet, Rosanvallon, Ricoeur, etc.). Here and now, in the face of the coronavirus, it would appear that the solution entails providing solutions to the consequences of the pandemic, or, at the very least, highlighting its *symptom of inhumanity* (through thinkers such as Innerarity, Ramoneda, Cortina, Žižek, Berardi, and the like) and/or resymbolising the meaning of the word *state* and its practical application or administration, after the disasters of the wars in Europe and the Spanish Civil War.

What do these considerations mean? Well, that the state-administration must open itself up to the citizenry, because that is what gives meaning to its task: that of helping citizens to overcome their difficulties, resolving their needs, helping them to grow, guaranteeing that it will not falter in aiding them, *caring* for them, and fostering opportunities for them to act freely. It is clear that it is here that civil entities encompassing the citizenry have their place and their responsibilities: from what Ricoeur called, in the 1950s, the role of the church and/or the trade unions to cultural, educational and social organisations of all kinds. Today we may mention the NGO, but also, having seen the huge response of the citizenry to the COVID-19 crisis, of citizen engagement and of patient institutional (administrative) collaboration, as has been the case in the healthcare, education, voluntary sectors.

All in all, what this means is that the state must provide the educational wherewithal to its citizens —caring for them— and it is they who must provide the solutions, even if any mass society needs the organisational help of the administration of the state. However, what the state should not do is to force people to follow its statist standards, if these involve blind obedience to the application of legal acts, without gauging their effect upon human life.

In *El perdón en la vida pública*,³² Galo Bilbao pointed out, a few years ago now, the need to introduce the sense of forgiveness in public life in which the action of the state entails a significant amount of humility in political and administrative life, which would appear necessary in the duties of the judiciary.

What does the introduction of a sense of forgiveness in public life entail? Basically, two things:

- First, overcoming resentment, which —we would say— is, unlike repentance (experts talk of the uselessness of the former),³³ nothing more than a memory without generosity, a deformed memory that may lead to feelings of vengeance and hinder the praxis of the public administration, which must be objective and in no way vengeful.

31 Just as science applies its laws to the personal and life circumstances of each and every human subject, as is the case with medical issues, which are also at the same time psychological, relational, institutional, etc.

32 *El perdón en la vida pública*. Universidad de Deusto (p. 53-104).

33 Leading jurist Javier Melero limits repentance in Spain’s Criminal Code to cooperative behaviour in the future to avert future acts and/or the consequent punishments for the offender (“El penediment”, 14 December 2020, *La Vanguardia*).

- Second, to propose reparations in the legal field from the hypothetical aggressor to the victim (with society or the state being regarded as the administrator of the latter). And, with regard to reparations made by the aggressor, one should ask oneself what he or she provides so that his or her generosity is not interpreted as a payment of some kind to receive favourable treatment from the administration.

Turning to the *principles* of the power of the state, in its different forms, applied to the society it must protect, three fundamental features come to mind, which directly affect the public administration:

Firstly, *it must guarantee the security of people and property*. Of everyone, in whatever procedural circumstances in which the judiciary is involved, and however heterogeneous the fields in which it has to settle responsibilities, there is a need to enhance its sensitivity and justice. Examples can be found in the troubling recent cases of the gang rapes of women, as with Pamplona's "Wolf Pack", or attacks by civilians on police forces as in the Altsasu case, or in the very politico-judicial actions against those not holding any political office in political cases, as in the case of one of "the Jordis" in the macro-process of Catalan independence. And the opportune distinctions must be made to prevent arbitrariness, whose consequences would be unforeseeable. The opposite reflects a suspicious legal confusion that augurs no good.

Secondly, *there must be a guarantee that the law will be applied in defence of the social good* (the common good, political and economic stability, justice and social cohesion, among others) in an unhurried and prudent manner. If not, public disaffection with the state is guaranteed.

And, thirdly, under no circumstances must hostility and hatred be encouraged, but rather reconciliation between citizens. Here, great care would appear to be required in the narrative employed (including the currently, and sadly, highly active "fake news"), which means that the judiciary should not carry out any political actions that it is not entitled to, committing warped administrative abuse.

This third feature is so significant that it defines the limit between a democratic state and one that is not and, furthermore, makes it erratically and bumblingly seem that the state is the origin of society, and a place where impunity reigns. And where there is impunity, we know that anything ruled by power —be it political or judicial— can happen. This means the end of all civic-mindedness, of all and any sound administration, and all and any community in the personalist sense.

3 The state and European administration. The problems of European states

3.1 The place of the state in the European Union of today

Recently, regarding non-European states, Daniel Innerarity stated that, from our position as citizens of the European Union, "we represent something that they cannot stand: a cooperative, diversity-based way of organising post-sovereignist political coexistence."³⁴ For his part, Alain Touraine said, in a recent interview, that, "the European Union's strength lies not in its arms nor in the discipline it imposes upon its citizens, but rather in its internal pluralism. It is the only region of the world which has the slogan 'We live together with our differences'. This attaches great importance to defending migrants and refugees".³⁵

Opinions such as these, which are basically positive with regard to the effectiveness and/or potential of the European Union, are many and varied, but complaints about its ineffectiveness should also be taken into account.³⁶ The fact is, the problems that Europe, and the European Union in particular, has to deal with are

34 In a recent editorial for the journal *Calidoscopi* (issue 46), entitled "A què pot fer front la Unió Europea", we stated that, "states, constituted in modern times, do what they want. Nevertheless, despite this fact, the European Union is an interesting thing, in that it introduces the 'citizen right' (even though this has not actually been legally ratified in any constitution), which emphasises human values and a reappraisal of human rights". (Translation in footnote from the original in Catalan; in-text translation is from the original in Spanish).

35 Interview in newspaper *La Vanguardia*, entitled: "La fuerza de Europa está en su pluralismo, no en las armas" (10 May 2019). (Translated from the original in Spanish).

36 In a succinct reference, yet one that is indicative of the concern with which the issue is regarded in many societies, including the Catalan, I would mention some papers in the book *Europa* (Col·loquis de Vic, Societat Catalana de Filosofia), such as:

- "Per què en diem Europa, si volem dir Occident?". N. Carrasco (p. 170-175).

many and serious, because they stem from the difficulties suffered by the component European states and because the European Union does not itself constitute a state: it has no constitution, nor does it seem likely to have one for many years to come. Basically, it is a matter of citizen education³⁷ and, if you want to put it that way, of *caring for people's souls*, with its associated political translation. Currently, with the disastrous refugee crisis,³⁸ or that of COVID-19, we would be right to ask ourselves, more than ever, what the level of Europeanness extant in the old Europe: community solidarity versus individual state action, or the incomprehensible attitude of certain political parties that seem to adhere to the incivic maxim of *the worse, the better*.³⁹ The fact is, in the worrying case of COVID-19 and its economic and social consequences, the Europe of the states is in complete chaos, almost to the point that it appears that there are ideological/political criteria and administrative constraints that are predominant due to what the other—the political rival turned enemy—may do or say. So, as a result, within the European Union, borders between states are being reinforced and discussions are held within each of them as to the suitability of self-isolations and quarantines, because these individual states have had their borders in place for many years (exactly how long depends on the state in question), and the only thing they have to do if to close them with police or military troops.

3.2 The European problems that do not go away

Cristina Gallach, member of the Council of the European Union in 2011, in her presentation entitled “El futur d’Europa: algunes reflexions” (The future of Europe: some thoughts), stated⁴⁰ that the European Union, founded by Schuman and Monet, was characterised by:

- The integration of individual and collective rights into the European Union, which is essential for its tolerance and success.
- In fact, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union of 2000 became legally binding with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Therefore, human rights policy encompasses civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and she stated that the issue of human rights covered, both within and outside of Europe’s borders, the rights of women, children, minorities and displaced persons.⁴¹ She even asserted that the European Union, as revived in 2010 by the Treaty of Lisbon, is that which has the most shared and common policies, more citizen participation and representation, and is the best-prepared to act in the world, although she did acknowledge that action is complicated by the complexity of the number of Member States.

- “Europa o l’etern retorn de la dialogia”. P. Casanovas (p. 181-185).

As well as press articles written before or independently of the “coronavirus” in *La Vanguardia*:

- “Derechos con sabor europeo”. David Dusster, 18 May 2019.

- “Insolidaridad”. Carles Casajuana, 19 August 2019.

- “Europa no funciona”. Guillem López-Casasnovas, 20 July 2020.

37 See our communiqué “Europa: educació humana en crisi?” (Europe: human education in crisis?), issued as part of the XV Col·loqui de Vic of October 2011, published in the Minutes in 2012, under the title *Europa* (p. 106-119) by the Catalan Philosophy Society (SCF) and Vic City Council.

38 An issue that is important enough to merit its own study, and one directly stemming from the confusion between security and selfishness in the European Union. As Carles Casajuana declared in 2019: “There are close to five hundred million of us living in the European Union, and we don’t receive more than a few hundred thousand immigrants a year. Given the ageing of the European population, this should be a relatively manageable figure. Opening up legal channels for receiving them is the best way to put the mafias out of the game. The weak point here is the reception and integration policy. Powers lie in the hands of Member States. The European Commission cannot intervene unless they ask it to”. (Translated from the original in Spanish).

39 Not so very long ago, after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Miquel Roca Junyent noted: “It is unsettling to see that the debate is focusing more on finding out ‘who’s to blame’ than on finding solutions. An unsettling race to be the first to discover the guilty party: outsiders, those who came before, neighbours or, if needs be, the citizenry itself...”. (“Desconcierto”, 21 July 2020, *La Vanguardia*; (translated from the original in Spanish). There is a clear tension here between the civic-mindedness and political profit, and there is no doubt as to which some political parties have chosen.

40 *Europa, op. cit.*

41 Which raises the obvious question of how and why the European Union acts as it does in the Mediterranean... although the President of the European Commission has recently stated that we cannot see a repeat of this drama.

- However, the European Union enjoys increased room for manoeuvre in every field, thereby reducing that of individual Member States. Thus, she noted that —despite restrictions— the European Parliament is more of a co-legislator than before. And she concluded by saying that European ideals are necessary in today's world: “the values of the Union, solidarity, respect for human rights and peace”.⁴²

Today, the problems affecting the European Union spring from the economic and political imbalances in the world, inequalities and poverty existing for decades, the nihilism holding sway over Europe, busy with its own development and deaf to the problems of countries colonised by it not so many years ago —the option of *taking care of having* (Patočka, Fromm) chosen by European societies and their states since the end of the 19th century. Today, the growing financial capitalism and the support of technology in competition with the USA and China jeopardise the lives of millions of Europeans, who will encounter great obstacles to finding work in the immediate future, with low salaries, difficulties in paying for decent housing and with abusive laws that, additionally, will be particularly suffered by immigrants, and so on and so forth.

In Europe, reborn after the Second World War, despite the mythical explanation proffered by the Greeks as to its unitary origin, based on the late of the seizing and subsequent seduction (or rape?) of the virgin daughter of the King of Phoenicia —Europa— by almighty Zeus, its territories have, for time immemorial, been at each other's throats, as they are today, with the increasing support for its *Brexits* and pro-fascist scepticisms.

Whittling down a doubtless long and varied list, of the immediate challenges faced by the European Union, we are left with four significant internal problems: the current growth in anti-European populisms/nationalisms, which are becoming increasingly fashionable; Brexit, which harms everyone; the conflict between the laws of some Member States and European legislation (as with Poland, Hungary and Spain), and the not insignificant environmental problem —including the coronavirus problem— and the treatment of animals,⁴³ aside from the aforementioned refugee drama, in spite of what the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights affirms. The problems are piling up, with the resulting disaffection of Europe's citizenry.⁴⁴

In June 2019, the Public Administration School of Catalonia (EAPC) itself proposed, in partnership with the German Research Institute for Public Administration (FÖV) a seminar entitled “The process of European integration, today”, which highlighted a good number of the difficulties mentioned above, beginning with its lack of a constitution. We focus the obstacles addressed in the seminar on three areas of challenges for the European Union: the values to be implemented, the weight of the European Union and the robustness of its legislation, and the resulting scepticism of its citizens towards these.

Regarding the first area of challenges, Professor of State Theory, Dr Karl P. Sommermann, spoke about the values that unite us, their practical dimension and their operativity in European states.⁴⁵

Turning to anti-European nationalist populism, one must accept that there are many variants: from straightforward fascist ideology to serious and sizeable operations like the UK's Brexit⁴⁶ and nationalist laws that disregard European requirements and ignore the Court of Justice of the European Union in Luxembourg⁴⁷ (with Poland, Hungary and Spain providing examples of the latter). It must be borne in mind that, in some areas, European legislation is binding upon Member States: for example, Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union notes the need for mutual trust between its rules of law (the solidarity that Robert Schuman

42 *Europa, op. cit.* (p. 218). (Translated from the original in Catalan).

43 Pérez Francesch, Joan Lluís (2020). “Elementos para un nuevo paradigma político tras la crisis del Covid-19. La ética del cuidado a debate”. *Forum of Animal Law Studies*, 11.

44 To a large degree, all of this is the result of the lack of a European constitution and the bureaucratic workings of Europe's states.

45 The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights speaks of common values (in the Preamble), dignity (Art. 1) of the praxis of values not just to look good, and of the right to good administration (Art. 41).

46 With regard to which, Ian Kershaw noted that it was the greatest act of national self-harm in post-war history (October 2019). Richard Sennett had previously expressed a similar opinion.

47 One can glimpse mistrust between states that bodes ill for the cohesion of the European Union (it is clear to a number of Europe intellectuals, from the founders of the European Community like Schuman to Habermas himself, that questioning the European Union will lead to disaster).

had previously called for),⁴⁸ but with restrictions on arrest warrants in the case of doubts regarding legal independence in some states. And, if some state is found to be in flagrant violation of this trust, it may be sanctioned by the European Union.

Thus, the European Union can be seen as providing a sort of umbrella coverage for citizens' rights. In any case, as noted by Article 3, the values of the European Union are applicable to the politics of its states.⁴⁹ This forces them to improve their political culture. Indeed, the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon enshrines the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, proclaimed in 2000.⁵⁰ Inspired by this, work still needs to be done in many Member States in several legal, financial and tax-related fields, as well as that of the institutional administrative consolidation of the European Union itself, such as the procedures for appointing Members of the European Parliament.

From a civic standpoint, the hopes flowering after 1945, looking to Europe to be a guarantee of dialogue and liberal democracy, are fading. We can see how the Europe of today is making its way alone against vast economic and political empires like the US, Russia and China, and the internal administrative problems of those representing the EU today can be seen clearly, with a growing bureaucracy that would appear to emulate some of its Member States, as well as the excessive dragging of heels with regard to the already endemic problem of refugees coming from outside of the EU and seeking asylum here. There are a great number of articles complaining about the ineffectiveness of the European Union.⁵¹ It is not for nothing that, with regard to its bureaucratisation, it has been stated that, "the worst is the inability to rid itself of the image of a distant, outdated bureaucracy affecting the European Commission and the rest of the Union's institutions".⁵²

Against such a civic horizon, Emmanuel Mounier and his works —a champion of Europe *defeated* in 1945— hold up a mirror to us, demanding civic-mindedness, by calling for Europe to become the direct inheritor of those human rights that had been so crushed during World War II. There is a need for engagement to lead the way towards a federal Europe of European peoples and cultures in which the state would do the necessary ancillary administrative tasks pertaining to it. As this has not been the case,⁵³ the Europe of today followed, to a large degree, the capitalist mirage and is now tainted by interests and privileges that do not provide the best of examples for its citizens. Also noteworthy is the contribution made by sociologist Eva Illouz who, in 2009, introduced the concept of *emotional capitalism*, glimpsing that economics and psychology go hand-in-hand, so that economic decisions have an emotional element, and that this involves the state and the administration.⁵⁴

By way of epilogue

Thus, what should be done, today, in a public administration? Simply, exercising civic-mindedness, no more and no less, which means ensuring the continued praxis of human rights, which, as such, must be peaceful yet determined, and valuing the contributions made by human qualities: intelligence, honesty and the priority

48 After the end of the Second World War, Robert Schuman, former Foreign Minister of France, negotiated some post-war treaties and, in 1950, promoted the project for European integration that would give rise to the European Coal and Steel Community. Shortly afterwards, he would become the first President of the European Parliamentary Assembly, regarded as a forerunner of today's European Parliament.

49 Following the Treaty of Lisbon —once it became impossible to implement the hypothetical European Constitution of 2003— Europe's legal community called for a community of law in which the Court of Justice of the European Union could work. So, after its ratification, the —administrative— Charter of Rights became binding upon EU Members States (except for Poland and the United Kingdom).

50 The Charter of Fundamental Rights is *legally binding*. Its Preamble and its 55 Articles set out the rights of Europe's citizens and the obligations of several administrative institutions to ensure that this is the case.

51 Note 30 makes reference to some of these complaints.

52 Aymerich, Ramon. "Europa, cada vez más sola". *La Vanguardia*, 13 October 2019, and "El mundo que viene", by the same author, *La Vanguardia*, 26 April 2020. (Translated from the original in Spanish.)

53 It was quite clear to Mounier that any *collective cause* was imperfect, which is why he talked of *engagement* rather than *enlistment*, more suited people who allow themselves to be guided by those shouting the loudest. He was already warning, in 1937 and 1938, of the perils of Europe remaining in the hands of the *blind enlistment* of which P. L. Landsberg spoke, which accommodated those who "allowed themselves to be led".

54 Illouz, Eva (2010). *La salvación del alma moderna* (p. 112-118 and 209-211). Katz Editores. Original title in English: *Saving the Modern Soul*.

will to improve our immediate environment.⁵⁵ More specifically, within the European Union, it must champion the union of European citizens, demonize tax havens and tackle the obstacles that come from outside Europe, by getting involved in a universal convergence of millions of people in defence of the most basic values and basic rights, rights that improve not only their own lives, but those of all men and women, whether they form part or not of European institutions.

Looking internally, there is a need to give the market economy a more civic focus: the current buzzwords are *natural capitalism*,⁵⁶ which would be worth revising in terms of the social market economy, such as the *market socialism* of David Schweickart and other thinkers,⁵⁷ to try to overcome the endeavours of the *new predatory capitalism*, mindful of the benefits that nature brings. Giorgio Kallis, the economist specialising in ecology, recently noted that the key question is how to get ahead in capitalism in an economy *without growth*. Capitalism —says the World Economic Forum— must focus on food-related and domestic issues, and should invest in technology for precision agriculture and the manufacture of more renewable goods and needs to encourage refurbishment and recycling and prioritise cooperative infrastructure and clean energies. And, in turbulent times such as these (with COVID-19 and climate change and full of economic, civil and legal arbitrariness, refugees, deportations and more), it must put its weight firmly behind a sound, active and participative administration, far from any idea of impunity.

An administration that will have to carry on its duties within the limits applicable to it, progress in the task that Ian Kershaw assigns to the European Union, an entity that, “despite the risks of populism, has established democratic societies, in freedom, peace and prosperity, accepted by the majority of the population”.⁵⁸

We finish this article by taking up an assertion by activist Franco Berardi, who stated that, today, in times of coronavirus, nature highlights the limitations of our civilisation and invites us to think more carefully and caringly. We would conclude that this calls for a more balanced and socially judicious administration that, far from seeking blame for the contagions and from exculpating itself for the management, assumes the responsibilities and seeks to vanquish dystopia.

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55 As Daniel Innerarity (“El conocimiento tras la pandemia”, 13 March 2021, *La Vanguardia*) recently put it: “We must use the word ‘science’ in plural and that all scientific progress will never be able to dispel the insuperable ignorance that goes along with our human condition and that forms part of the complexity of the world in which we live. How do we define needs and priorities? Which limitations on freedom are justified and to what degree? Who has the ultimate legitimacy to take decisions: the people, its representatives, or the experts? On what bases is it established that someone does or does not belong to a risk group?” (translated from the original in Spanish).

56 We have recently seen the appearance of the notion of *natural capitalism*, posited by Paul Hawken and Amory B. Lovins, authors of *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*. Its focus is on growing economically, albeit, according to experts, not as we have been, and the implementation of technologies must be efficient (that is cost-effective) as possible.

57 The book we have published, *Democracia económica* (with two editors, A. Comín and L. Gervasoni), provides some thought-provoking contributions on an economy that respects both nature and humankind.

58 Kershaw, Ian (2019). *Ascenso y crisis. Europa, 1950-2017: un camino incierto. (Memoria Crítica)*. (Translated from the original in Spanish).

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