

# THE PANDEMIC: THE GREATEST CHALLENGE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE THIRD SECTOR

## A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION

By Oscar Alfredo Piccolo

[oscarpiccolo@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:oscarpiccolo@yahoo.com.ar)

[www.scivilcambiaalmundo.com.ar](http://www.scivilcambiaalmundo.com.ar)

[www.3r-evolutiva.com.ar](http://www.3r-evolutiva.com.ar)

Life on our planet has taken a drastic and dramatic turn, plagued by the covid-19 pandemic, which has no end in sight, the truth is that it changed the social and economic fabric of the world. In train to envision these changes, there are some who do not raise doubts, we already know that the pandemic will have a catastrophic effect on the world economy, it only remains to know its dimension. Many others we must predict, perhaps, we are going to a more closed world more nationalistic less globalized, we have seen that each nation, apply its own strategy, leaving in the background that we are facing a planetary problem. Another factor to consider is that in an emergency, security prevails over freedom, and that is the breeding ground where governments seem to fall "too much" in love with a certain political authoritarianism, to the detriment of liberties and democratic institutions.

From another point of view, we are witnessing an acceleration of changes in the work modality that tends to its automation, the "home office" or telework, distance education, telemedicine will be the order of the day and in the same sense, marketing of products with greater derivation to delivery or "door to door", to which must be added the production of goods or services that will be even more automated. This approach to the digital economy will have a strong impact on unemployment levels, already seriously aggravated by the economic crisis, even though in the future, technology may create others, the theme is that the transition will be traumatic and inequitable.

The international policy outlook and its geopolitical and economic implications are not very positive. The recent trade conflict between the US and China, slowed down economic development and may have an even worse outcome, if we add the serious claims that many central countries directed at the China's possible responsibility in this pandemic, which could shake the international political table and world trade, with a propensity for economic protectionism. If we add to all this the devastating effect of the pandemic, it is easy to imagine that the well-being of the civilian population will be seriously at stake.

A separate chapter deserves democracy, which has not been in its prime for a long time, and is highly questioned - perhaps this is the reason, for the recent appearance of populist rulers in historical democracies. This idea of a certain democratic decline is further aggravated, if we bear in mind that great world powers have autocratic systems, and in opposition, the Anglo-Saxon and European democracies, which historically were the battering ram and they generated a point of political balance before authoritarian regimes, as the world wars and the fall of the

will have made clear. I think we are aware that when the democratic idea is attacked, full liberties and civic values are jeopardized.

**If so, the cocktail seems worrying, more poverty, marginalization and unemployment and less political and civil liberties.** It also coexists with this hopeless scenario, a notorious increase in human solidarity, with a greater sensitivity in its gaze to the neighbor, and its maximum social predisposition to overcome the humanitarian crisis and make the necessary life changes, attentive to a reevaluation of the human and community ties, including changes in political and economic structures that may be necessary.

Aware of this apparent dichotomy, world leaders have affirmed that the best remedy, to cope with this pandemic, its future effects and the best general well-being, would be: **universal solidarity and precisely that medicine only seems to be in the hands of civil society. This will be their greatest historical challenge.** It becomes clear, when we understand that national governments, economic powers and even international organizations, which are generally conditioned by the contribution of the most powerful, have different interests, it will be very difficult for them to recreate -in reality non-discursive- universal solidarity. Let us not forget that the functioning of the political and economic systems is based on competition, even confrontation, whereas the actions of civil society are based on cooperation or collaboration.

Faced with the winds of change that are incubating, and the seriousness of the world situation, we consider that **the actions of civil society and the Third Sector are at a historic crossroads.**

Obviously, it can continue its current course, more than meritorious, even with some dark gaps: an atomized action, without much clarity about the ultimate goal, its role or its place in relation to political and economic power.

Or, consider that it is the ideal time for civil society not only to seek to advance in a broader role, but to enhance its presence and activity by strengthening the resilience of the community, not only in the face of these humanitarian calamities, but in defense of more vulnerable, as well as their freedoms and social values, and for this, it is necessary to build the foundations of new systemic social movements, to generate the indispensable political and economic changes.

To face this historical crossroads, without hesitation, I pay the last option, since I strongly believe that civil society should occupy a leading and predominant role since it is the only one that can provide universal solidarity.

To face a path of change, it is necessary for civil society and the Third Sector to be clear about their reality, and to engage in a philosophical discussion, which will give them the necessary answers to these questions: **what is driving this phenomenon? What is your role and your relationship with the state and the market? And what would be its north or final objective?**

It is precisely the questions that we speculate to answer, via a proper perspective of political philosophy, which is the a priori of science. **Machiavelli pointed out to us that it is not a simple pastime of philosophers, it is essential to structure society politically.** This is evident before the centuries of development of the different visions of political philosophy have had their purpose in finding, the way to enter the human macro-political system, greater virtue and justice, to compensate for selfish tango and abuse of power.

It is the purpose of this, to propose to promote this indispensable philosophical discussion and which, in turn, can help to think about how civil society enhances its activity as the protagonist of that social feat.

In this sense, and to give rise to and provoke this discussion, more than succinctly, - since its development is contained in two books - we will enunciate an **anthropological, systemic and evolutionary political theory, which we call Operational Love**, which tells us how Solidarity, empathy or human love in politics would “operate” in its two meanings: vertical-political referring to the political linked to power, which points to the hierarchical order or its counterpart, horizontal-politics or the common good . What is politics without any connotation of power. Its value and its only goal is to achieve the common good, the well-being of all. We believe that its implementation would superlatively increase the global phenomenon of civil society, would make the democratic idea evolve, to man and society, virtualizing the economic market and power. For this reason and with the humility of the case, we will try to “do creative political philosophy”, not only with a total attachment to reality but as a concrete solution to the dilemma of the third sector.

Before everything, we mention briefly, the framework ideas about democracy and the phenomenon of power. **Affirming that the main purpose of power and in general of those who exercise it is not the search for the common good. It is power by itself.** Here is the notorious imbalance of the human macro-political system. It also contains a theory of the natural birth of power. And its characteristics: it is omnipresent in all human activity, it has its own mechanics, and it is indifferent to all ideologies or doctrines. Its origin is anthropological and social, mindful that living is living together.

We believe that **democracy is a human invention**, today at risk, that should be perfected permanently, since power works in the folds of democracy, to direct it to its usual ends, that is why democracy currently seems weak and unanswered. It must evolve, and precisely its evolution comes from the paradigm shift in civil society.

In a very tight synthesis, we will try to answer, what drives this phenomenon since since the 90s, there is no more doubt, that civil activism is a planetary political phenomenon, characterized by the virtuous global role of civil society. As well I am in evidence before the Comparative Project of the non-profit sector of the Johns Hopkins University.

It is evident that there is no power, ideology, fashion, religion or belief that can generate that hundreds of millions of people in each corner of the planet, "in unison", work to help the other or to improve the planet, that is why we consider it to be something transit in human nature.

Let us agree that **solidarity** is a value through which the People, individually or in groups, lend their support, protection, collaboration and help to all who need it. It is a value that seeks the common good. **In reality, solidarity, altruism, empathy, virtuous disposition, are one of the multiple forms and intensities of human love, especially brotherly love, transit in all other forms of love. For this reason we conclude that the engine of this phenomenon is brotherly love**, in some of its forms and intensities. It seems naive, idyllic, dreamy. Let's see ... the most important physicist of the 20th century, **Albert Einstein**, in one of the letters he sent to his daughter, which some question, asserted that at that time society was not prepared to understand the existence of the most powerful force in the world: **LOVE**. He indicated that society needs to manufacture a "**love bomb**", for this he affirmed that each individual carries within him a small but powerful generator of love whose energy waits to be released. Love is the fifth essence of life, he concluded.-\*

But where is that powerful force to be found? Paraphrasing Einstein, who resides mainly in the heart and soul of each one of the millions of volunteers who disinterestedly release love, powerful, vital, renewable and endless energy, as well as in each one of the human beings, to a greater or lesser extent, put to coexist.

**I consider that this is the historical moment, in which the third sector faces its greatest challenge .....** "**to manufacture the love bomb**", whose target and protagonist is human society, more specifically civil society. And concomitantly, we will try to answer the remaining questions, how to propose an evolutionary north to their existence and how to coexist with the remaining two systems: the political and economic, namely:

The world turns on two systems, political and economic, both of selfish imprint. Therein lies his lack of balance. The idea is to balance it, injecting virtue and ethics into the human macro-political system, hand in hand with civil society, the only sector that can be universal in scope and aims to build the common good.

**THE UTOPIA OR LAST END OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY PHENOMENON, WOULD BECOME "A FRATERNAL, VIRTUOUS AND ETHICAL SYSTEM" COMPARABLE TO THE OTHER TWO SYSTEMS.**

The vision is that the current Third Sector, -today, with an atomized action- can become the backbone of a "fraternal and ethical system", where love or virtue is the currency, not money. This virtuous and solidary movement must be an organized horizontal system with a possible universal reach. The entry of LOVE, into the macro-political organization of man, would imply generating an innovation in political engineering, which provokes the evolution of democracy and of the human being. For this we must relearn the rules and create new ones to play the old political game,

since the existence of a fraternal system, rigorously ethical, in tension, mutual control and complementation with the two prevailing systems, the political and economic, would achieve the desired balance and would build greater common good.

How? Creating an absolutely horizontal “organizational framework for action”, without the connotation of power, that enhances its operation, based on rigorous ethical standards. A framework is a quasi-automatic system, subject to certain rules, in which civil society can act or operate. . An example may be the internet, which is the current framework for global communication.

What infinitely enhances its actions is to generate the participation of the entire society - not just the Third Sector. Not only do third sector entities and their volunteers interact, but society would be the one who uses it.

**In its four main functions - they are not the only ones - that are summarized**

- The current revolution of universal solidarity, (**which can generate the most powerful and ethical wealth distribution system in the world**)
- The social control of all power, or to soften, let's say, collaborate with effective and transparent governance aimed at the common good.
- The generation of horizontal policies and the common good.
- The conformation of ethical values and axiological social capital, especially towards the internal functioning of the fraternal system, via the adoption of a sort of Iram norms, which places them AWAY FROM POWER or HIERARCHY and from the profit interest that characterizes the MARKET. .

Let us not forget that to make love enter politics is to make society function in a mirror with what beats in every human heart. **Here is the CONCEPT OF OPERATIONAL LOVE**, that which operates in political reality, to achieve greater common good.

This would complete man, since we consider that the potentiality that distinguishes him from the other creatures of this world, is not only the reason, as it is generally held, but both, "**Reason and human love**", their union and amalgamic tension, would not only complete us but would make us evolve inexorably. And that is its ultimate goal, to evolve. We share what Aristotle affirmed, that the end of each man can be happiness, but we maintain that the end of a species is evolution.

**The surprising thing is that no major changes are needed, nor infrastructure, nor resources, nor volunteers. Everything is within reach, the only differentiator is the idea**, which gives young people, those who lack paradigmatic paralysis, a utopia of a better world, illustrates how to do it in practice, from any community to being able to reach the world whole, via globalization.

**The pragmatic tool of the work is a human promotion program of local application, but with a global perspective.** The Theory contains a pragmatic program of horizontal, free and organized operation strategy of the living forces, which can start in a community, a region, a nation and reach the entire world.

If implemented, civil society would stop asking for participation to become a peaceful, evolutionary revolution of the human spirit that would impact the democratic system, and place society and man on the next evolutionary step.

Raised this simple statement, to tend to a debate as broad and constructive as possible, given that in the face of the humanitarian crisis we are experiencing and its future consequences, I consider essential a position of greater protagonism and action by civil society to alleviate the critical situation, be it by a route described or any other.