The twenty-first century begins: the right to live

When, coming from feminisms, we defend "putting life at the center", some raise their eyebrows and look at us smugly. Life, they believe, sustains itself, reproduces itself "naturally", has no value and costs no money, is given freely and is received without any thanks.

In the midst of this pandemic, we need to change that idea; we are experiencing something unusual: keeping us alive requires an enormous effort. It is the first need and the first right.

We would have never thought that it would take such a considerable and at the same time such trivial effort. Lock up at home and protect ourselves; for ten minutes a day, go out onto balconies or to the windows to give our warm support to all those who are fighting so that this will not last any longer.[i] Asking for help from technicians, professionals, neighbors, volunteers, in a fight expressed in militaristic terms: "war against the virus", "we are going to win this war"... I don't like wars, not even that one.

Let's speak another language: that of rights, of the common, of mutual care. Self-restraint and common sense. This dogma that "everyone must look after himself" and the common good will prevail as a consequence, has shattered. Goodbye to classical liberalism and its perfidious neoliberal reappearance. The twenty-first century really begins with this pandemic. A century in which defending the right to live will be a priority. Because perhaps for

the first time in history the "few" cannot defend themselves by leaving everyone else in the lurch. Not only is there no other planet to flee to if this one sinks, but there will be no time, and the pandemic does not discriminate.

We need another imaginary with at least two principles: to ensure that right with unrestricted access to the common wealth. An updated vision of the "common goods": a guaranteed basic income, something like what the living wage was in the nineteenth century. At that time, the right to a paid job was defended, because a large part of the population did not have it; they had jobs, but without pay. Now we have to defend the right to an income. The idea that no one should be left behind is serious. It is not charity, it is survival.

The second is a new policy. We are proving that we know how to obey when our lives are at stake. At the same time, public institutions must use all the decision-making capacity they have accumulated and which they exercise in our name to defend this first right. We are defining a new principle of justice: everything that goes against the right of all people to live with dignity, that is to say, austerity policies, corruption, seeking personal gain in the exercise of politics, real estate speculation, privatization of public goods, social cuts, the precarization of employment, all of this should be considered a crime against survival. Living versus improving, that is the slogan of this century. No longer the "get rich" we have had drilled into our heads drilled in all the crises and wars of the last century. Money is needed to live, not to extort others, and public money is needed to promote and defend that right. This unbridled greed has gone too far. It must be stopped. That is why we need politics.

Nietzsche once said that important changes arrive on tiptoes, imperceptibly. And Marx knew very well that history is moving on the wrong side. Because the challenge demands of us an effort of imagination and a courage that we did not think we were capable of. Let's get to it.

The twenty-first century has just begun.

[i] In cities in Spain and elsewhere, neighbors staying in home isolation have developed a daily tradition of meeting on balconies or at open windows at a certain time of day to give cheers of thanks to medical and other workers responding to covid.