

CLIMATE CATASTROPHE?

This is a somewhat uncomfortable topic. We are on a path of direct confrontation with the open denial of global warming. The fossil fuel industry and its influence on politics is the main white elephant in the room and its weight was laid bare when the final 2022 report of the IPCC, the world's leading authority on climate issues, was released. However, while the role of the oil industry was highlighted throughout the nearly 3,000-page report, scientists noted that the topic was mysteriously absent from the Summary for Policymakers, which is usually the one that attracts the most media attention. Today it is perceived as impossible to restrict emissions, which in these years have exploded, while the time seems to be approaching when we are called to mobilize to “save the planet”, with all the techno-scientific resources that will unfortunately be necessary. Global climate disorder, which was experienced as an abstract possibility, is already upon us. The Belgian philosopher Isabelle Stengers, author with the Nobel Prize in Physics and Chemistry Ilya Prigogine of two books on chaos theory (1984, 1997) as well as other valuable works on modern science and what she called *cosmopolitics*, has written a different essay, as a citizen who experiences firsthand the developments of contemporary life, trying to criticize and supersede the idea of progress and rational efficiency promoted by the forces driving capitalism in this phase of “knowledge economy” (In *Times of Catastrophe*, [2009], 2017). She argues that those who, mostly scientists, thought it was enough to sound the alarm neglected the fact that political forces had already handed over the helm to capitalism by renouncing any freedom of action.

50 years ago when the prospects of technical-scientific innovation were synonymous with progress, it would have been inconceivable not to expect scientists and technologists to solve the problems of development. But that trust has suffered greatly, even more so with the “knowledge economy”, which ensures that the answers that scientists will not stop proposing, do not prevent the catastrophe that they are just beginning to process. Since the 70s it became clear that there was a dense set of relationships that scientific disciplines had been analyzing separately – living beings, oceans, atmosphere, climate, more or less fertile soils – that provided the context for the life of the planet (which James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis baptized as *Gaia* (1974) and that Stengers partially takes up), product of a history of coevolution where variation in one aspect has multiple repercussions on the rest. Stengers

presents it as an insensitive entity, which reacts (in the biological sense of the term *irritability*) to certain conditions that we ourselves have created.

Scientists have done their job and have also managed to sound the alarm despite all attempts to silence them, imposing an “inconvenient truth” despite the accusations that were raised against them of having mixed science with politics. They have been able to resist because they knew that time counted, and that it was not they who were responsible, but what they opposed, which in the new governance constitutes a way of depoliticizing decisions regarding the future due to the lack of social legitimacy, reducing politics to a kind of managerialism to impose its imperatives on the entire planet. In this, economists and other candidates for the production of global responses based on “science” stand out from other experts, because the capitalist economic organization seeks a way to make the crisis a business to avoid at all costs the cessation or retreat of progress in economic warfare. Their authority helps keep the world running as usual, leading it to catastrophe. As an example, Stengers evokes the ideas of green capitalism and carbon markets, including the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the United Nations, where some goals are raised more in terms of opportunities for entrepreneurship and economic development, not being binding and appealing more to political wills than anything else.

To avoid this end, the author proposes to articulate wills, recognizing the differences in scientific knowledge associated with practitioners-experts and lay knowledge associated with users. It is time to learn together in multiple struggles and with divergent commitments in a process of creation, doubtful and uncertain as it may be. One mechanism would be for users to interest themselves in issues in which they were not supposed to interfere, and for scientists to listen to those questions and experiences that before they did not deign to attend to because they were alien to their field, creating confidence in common action, under conditions of equality crossed by the heterogeneity of the particular. In this Stengers does not pretend to be original, although she does support local action in relation to different interest groups that are growing more and more around the world.

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