

ONCE THE RISK HAS CROSSED THE RUBICON

The hallmark of a complete break with the past is that it pulverizes at a stroke strongholds that seemed to be eternal. Their massive foundations, architecture, organizational and human structures are swept away. Such is the case of hyper-terrorism: the risk it conveys whips through all our mental defenses and crosses the Rubicon – the forbidden frontier. It unilaterally annihilates all the basic conventions: limited gravity, low probability, natural independence between events, more than enough intervention capacity to meet requirements... It perverts and transforms the radical hypothesis – inclusion in a logic of life – and imposes instead the logic of death with its inflexible laws and fatal fascination.

We have two options. One is a recipe for certain fiasco: we can balk at those limits which no longer exist and apply, with feverish reactivity as voluntary blindness to facts demands, old and trusted recipes which are no longer relevant. The other is strong and resolute invention: we accept that the world has changed and launch into determined and creative breaks with tradition.

These breaks, these new departures, will be changing our vision of the world, our modes of governance, our respective roles, our purely technical tools. The essential conclusions reached by the American commission of enquiry into the events of September 11, are central to our efforts to resist. They highlight the two major flaws of our existing systems: lack of imagination, failing leadership. The keys to salvation are the capacity to shake off the rules of the past and the shackles of purely technical logic and adopt instead a position of governance. We are now confronted with inscrutable dilemmas, inconceivable outcomes and scriptless scenarios. Above all, this is a challenge of strategic proportions with crucial repercussions for decision makers.

Everything depends on whether, collectively, we are ready to leave the path of self-delusion (disguised of course by a profusion of speeches and much prevarication). And also whether we are sufficiently determined to tackle collectively and effectively the challenges of our times.

This is the framework to which Erwann Michel-Kerjan's work refers. He has participated in the most advanced international reflection and, from these excellent sources, he has drawn some proposals for concrete solutions.

The challenge: learn to explore – without any further delay – radically novel courses of action, however difficult and uncertain, so that we may retain control over our own fate.

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