Indigenous thinker and leader Ailton Krenak exposes the destructive tendencies of our ‘civilization’: rampant consumerism, environmental devastation and a narrow and restricted understanding of humanity’s place on this Earth.

For many centuries, Brazil’s Indigenous peoples have bravely faced threats of total annihilation and, in extremely adverse conditions, have reinvented their lives and communities. At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the rest of the world to reconsider its lifestyle, Ailton Krenak’s clear and urgent thinking emerges with newfound impact and offers a vital perspective on the enormous challenges we face today: the ravages of the pandemic and the devastation caused by global warming, to name just two.

Krenak questions the value of going back to normal when ‘normal’ is a vision of humanity divorced from nature, actively destroying the planet and digging deep trenches of inequality between peoples and societies. The ‘civilized’ world insists on giving life a purpose but life is not ‘useful’ and ‘civilization’ is not destiny. We must learn to embrace the joy of living life to its fullest, and inhabit the stillness that comes with not always being useful.

In the wake of the pandemic, we have an opportunity to create deep and meaningful change in the way we live: this, more than ever, is a time to listen to voices that are one with the body of the Earth.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ailton Krenak was born in Minas Gerais, Brazil, in the Doce River Valley region which has been severely affected by mining. A leading environmental activist and campaigner for Indigenous rights, he organized the Alliance of Forest Peoples, which unites riverine and Indigenous communities throughout the Amazon. He has consistently been one of the best-known campaigners in the movement set in motion by the Indigenous Awakening in the 1970s and was a key figure in the formation of the Union of Indigenous Nations (UIN), which brought together 180 different Indigenous groups across the country in a unified front to push for rights. He was awarded the Order of Cultural Merit by the President of the Republic in 2016, and holds an honorary doctorate from the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais. His previous book, Ideas to Postpone the End of the World, was an international bestseller, with more than 50,000 copies sold in Brazil alone.

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