

# “Only Fear Governs Us: From the Programmed Degradation of the Living to its Spontaneous Rebirth”

By Raoul Vaneigem<sup>1</sup>

1. *Fear fills the gap between false reality and lived reality*, between the fictitious economy and the fundamental economy. Governmental numbers hover like drones over the deterioration of hospitals, schools, transportation networks and established social rights.

2. *Fear has become the strongest rampart of the rich* against the social insurrection that threatens to eradicate them. They will go for anything that renews this fear and prolongs its duration. They conduct experiments on us, as on laboratory rats, because they are anxious know the extent to which resignation and debasement will make us support and follow their orders.

3. The governmental and globalist authorities have used as a pretext *a virus, which the public health and research sector would have brought to an end* if the principle of profitability had not ruined it.<sup>2</sup> Propagated under the name of COVID-19 – enunciated<sup>3</sup> like a curse – the panic has caused more deaths than the virus itself. Not to mention the [lethality of the] vaccines and pseudo-vaccines that were improvised during that lucrative emergency. The manufacturing of terror presented a double advantage. It masked the scandal of the mismanaged hospitals and it reinforced the authority of the State, which was constantly weakening.

4. Security having supplanted healthcare, they embarked upon a local war in which the number of victims did not affect the bottom lines of the weapons dealers, the financial monopolies or the States made ridiculous by the mental poverty of their leaders. Nuclear peril was hastily reactivated. The strategy of the scapegoat was renovated: pro-Ukrainians and pro-Russians replaced the pro-vaccines and anti-vaccines. This ridiculous and bloody farce temporarily hid *the gradual instauration of “social credit” on the Chinese model<sup>4</sup> and the social devastation caused by the tornado of crazy money.*

5. It is now time for *the energetic-ecological apocalypse* to take over. While the governmental and global mafias destroy the planet with impunity, it is to the ordinary citizen that they are

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<sup>1</sup> Raoul Vaneigem, “Seule la peur nous gouverne. De la déchéance programmée du vivant à sa renaissance spontanée,” transmitted by email on 18 September 2022 and dated 19 September 2022. Translated by NOT BORED! on 20 September 2022. All footnotes by the translator.

<sup>2</sup> Vaneigem has written on this subject before. See “Coronavirus,” 17 March 2020: <http://www.notbored.org/coronavirus.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *martelé* can also mean “hammered home.”

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Drew Donnelly, “China Social Credit System Explained – What is it & How Does it Work?” posted 22 July 2022 by NH Global Partners:

<https://nhglobalpartners.com/china-social-credit-system-explained/?wpmeteorisable=1>

giving the order to generate savings that favor a system that, by dint of economizing on itself, is sinking below the threshold of a disgraceful poverty. An energy police, financed by those who will brazenly make a business out of it, will be authorized to surveil and control the temperatures inside homes. You will see that, encouraged by scientific commissions that attribute an increase of pollution to the flatulence of cows, they will end up taxing farts. Moreover, who knows if a referendum that was amply subsidized and well supported by the media wouldn't produce a favorable overcome?

6. Faced with such aberrations, the part of public opinion that has been spared by the de-braining machine believes that we are governed by madmen and morons.<sup>5</sup> But this only lends a human appearance to the machinery of a system that crushes the living. We quickly realize the following: *we aren't governed by madmen and morons [des malades], but by disease [la maladie]. More precisely, by the fear of disease.*

If we suppose that families wanted to file lawsuits against the managers of this murderous politics (of which their family members were the victims), they would find themselves in the presence of madmen and morons with limited responsibilities or an obviously irresponsible destiny. Only amnesty and amnesia could fill such a legal void. Precedents are not lacking: the crimes of the colonialists have never been prosecuted.

7. The enormity of the lie that power has introduced into the dominant language is an *inversion of the meaning* that Orwell gave to “newspeak.” Those who are convinced that “Freedom is slavery” will feel neither pain nor pleasure in admitting that what causes health and happiness to flourish is money, profit-making.

8. We wander in a *no man's land*<sup>6</sup> that separates a *deadly civilization that never stops dying and a living civilization that is slow to assert itself audaciously*. Dark is the horizon that is sealed off by the omnipotence of money. No doubt the thing that is the most disheartening is the ease with which the clanging of the machinery that crushes us becomes a kind of purring. But the purring of the cat doesn't prevent it from waking up with a start.

9. The worst danger posed by sprawling greed doesn't lie in the various mafias that control the world's weapons, banks, narco-pharmaceuticals, real estate holdings and financial swindles. It lies in the corruption of consciousness. Poverty poorly resists the seductions of having, acquired at the expense of being. If so many poor people become poor by selling themselves to the highest bidder, this means that the reverse is possible. *We are at a moment of history when a turning point has been reached*. The loss of *having* restores to *being* the priority that had been taken from it.

10. *The temptation is great to mobilize the violence that is slowly but surely growing amid the population*. The insolent boor [*paltoquet*] who currently occupies the Élysée<sup>7</sup> and his piss servants would willingly stage a parody of civil war. But who takes their nonsense seriously? The rhetoric of the barricades only burns cars and garbage cans. The urban guerrillas and the

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<sup>5</sup> The French word employed here, *malades*, can also mean “sick people.”

<sup>6</sup> English in original.

<sup>7</sup> Emmanuel Macron, the President of France since 2017.

followers of Che Guevara are discredited more by their victories than by their defeats. It only strengthens power when the Left, having betrayed the proletariat, exonerates itself of its guilt by going to war against a fascism that wears leather boots when, today, it actually wears a suit and a tie.<sup>8</sup> If retro-Nazism represents a threat, this because it prefigures a war of all against all in which the overflowing excess of accumulated resentment will be released. The global mafias will make money from such a war because chaos is good for business.

We must not deceive ourselves about combat. Militant anti-fascism most often clashes with psychopathic clowns instead of those who pull their strings – those who dehumanize, pollute, poison and devastate the land.

11. *Anger easily gets lost in reproaches.* We will only add individual guilt to collective guilt by stigmatizing those who, through their doors, windows and resignation allow pollution and pesticides get into their kitchens. Nothing will change as long as ecological elation contents itself with high-society demonstrations instead of paralyzing the commercial enterprises that are responsible for poisoning our food supplies, the water, and the air, and that kill more people than epidemics do. I'm not advocating aggressive militantism here, instead I'm thinking of the humorist Gébé,<sup>9</sup> who says, "We stop everything, we reflect and things aren't sad." The Yellow Vests of the traffic circles, streets and assemblies<sup>10</sup> have unexpectedly conferred a considerable weight upon this mischievous and generous naïveté. Their determination has resolved to increase this unexpected importance by stimulating the happiness of individuals and collectives. What had appeared to be chimerical, utopian or crazy confirms its reality in the light of the insurrections that impassion the most diverse regions of the world.

12. I loathe all forms of militarization, including the militarization of political militants, not for tactical reasons but because *we will not accede to a living society by using the weapons of a society that kills.* Let's be clear. We will not allow ourselves to be slaughtered, we will not give in to the forces of the repressive order, we will only abandon our territories that have been liberated from the yoke of the market in order to create others.

How can we dialogue with the State when monologue is its only method of expression? The situation seems blocked. But it is not. History has more than one trick up its sleeve.

13. It is good that the high-priority debates are distancing themselves from the sparring matches of sociology, critiques of critique and the intellectuality that, though emancipatory in the past, has rarely disengaged from the supremacy over the body's drives that the head arrogates for itself. As traditional authority is collapsing, it abandons on the river banks of thought two desiccating functions, which come from the division of labor: the intellectual function, which is

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<sup>8</sup> The French phrase used here is *en pantoufle et en cravate* (in slippers and a tie), but the nice contrast between leather boots and slippers didn't seem worth the incongruity of someone wearing slippers (very informal, domestic settings) and a tie (very formal, formal settings) at the same time.

<sup>9</sup> Gébé is a pseudonym of Gerard Cousseau (1953-present).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Raoul Vaneigem, "Concerning the 'Yellow Vests': Everything is possible, even self-managing assemblies in the middle of street intersections, villages and neighborhoods," interviewed conducted on 11 December 2018: <http://www.notbored.org/yellow-vests.pdf>.

the privilege of the masters, and the manual function, which is reserved for slaves.

14. The New Consciousness is gradually arming the unusual guerrilla fighters for a life that, by constant pestering, will overcome millenarian alienation. Emancipation will not proceed from the multitude, but from a small number of autonomous and radical individuals. It is “from within” – through radical subjectivity – that it will eradicate the little men of egotistical calculations and their herd-like individualism. The abolition of the transformation [of beings] into things – which one calls reification – begins with *the priority of the subject over the object, of life over the commodity*.

15. To the extent that stock-market speculation imposes itself as a new mode of predation, the monopolization of goods – typical of the old dynamism of the captains of industry – is relegated to the second rank and, along with it, a form of capitalism that had abandoned productivism for a consumerism that was judged to be more lucrative.

An empty opulence mummifies the owner. He or she is denied the enjoyment of his or her assets, because the art of pleasure is incompatible with the management of greed. Having is a loss of being. While boredom “puritanizes” the “rich” poor people who engage in a cut-rate hedonism, pauperization brings us a cache of weapons: *enjoyment is to mutual aid what appropriation is to predation*. To become aware of this is a step towards founding autonomous and united societies on which capitalism will break its teeth.

16. *History is at a crossroads that marks a breaking point*. The rich are getting bored with their yachts, their jets, their “trophy” lovers [*baises boutiquières*] and other frills. Having makes the flesh sad. The dispossessed, on the other hand, when they manage to extricate themselves from their financial difficulties, have nothing to breathe but the open air of cost-free pleasures. With happiness, they sense that love, solidarity, festive encounters, and the awakening of thought contain in seed form the annihilation of the society of profit-making. They know that the rediscovery of mutual aid abolishes predation. This has nothing to do with consolation or hope; it is a lived wealth. It constitutes the most beautiful gift that the Yellow Vests and the insurgents of everyday life have offered to humanity.

*The abundance of being abolishes having*. The living dead who are in power and their trans-humanist undertakers, who protect them from the light, will have no chance to understand this, until the dawn of reborn life scorches them and reduces them to ashes.

17. *To relearn how to have pleasure without fear reconnects with the joy of living*. The passionate attraction of the living confers upon happiness a right of citizenship that renders obsolete the objurations of Puritanism, of the contempt for and hatred of oneself and others, which power and money have furnished in abundance.

Except when it comes an obligation, pleasure is what most surely removes the fear of pleasure, from which comes all of the other fears.

It will be necessary for the children to teach the art of living to those who have never taught them anything other than how to grow old and die.

18. The emancipation of the human race will be inseparably social and existential. The economic oppression that alienates us has its anchoring in our character armor. Ever since the birth of market civilization, a muscular armoring has blocked our life drives in order to put them to work.

It makes our emotions savage, pushes them to tear each other apart, feeds our private psychodramas. The explosion of an infinite number of frustrations propels into the world the cruelest traits of barbarity and inhumanity. Such is the origin of the death drive, such is the nest of self-destruction that haunts us and whose absurdity stuns us.

19. *The machine that destroys us is our creation. It is up to us to destroy it.* Attack its mechanisms, avoid waging war against those who maintain them and lubricate them with our sweat. Profit-making ruins itself by making its deterioration profitable. Ruining its profitability helps it to collapse.

20. The pauperization that threatens us encourages the promotion of that which is cost-free, the recovery of the manna that life offers us, before the last dinosaurs chew it up. *So that a free people can freely cultivate the gardens of the earth!* Mutual aid is a poetic reality. It regroups autonomous individuals through affinity. By opening themselves to the freedom of their desires, they open up breaches in the citadel of global power, which is also undermined by its internal contradictions.

21. It isn't the least of capitalism's incoherencies that it today imposes an asceticism that had previously been repudiated by its frenetic promotion of a marketable hedonism. After persuading them to gain a commercial abundance, the rulers now enjoin the poor to be even poorer in order to save the planet. As a warning issued by the revolutionaries of 1789 says, "*Fuck with us? You will not fuck for long!*"

22. Reflection and the awakening of awareness leave behind [negative] slogans that are otherwise quite pertinent – such as "Let's burn our bills!" and "We won't pay any more!" The time has to come to no longer refuse the small gestures that create real pleasure. They add the weight of life to the reversal of perspective. They help to melt in the sun of life – which shines day and night – the glaciation of fear, of guilt, of character armor. The desires of the heart renounce nothing; there is no one who, despite the ridicule of market rationality, does not feel their intimate conviction.

The realistic power of dreams is not foreign to the self-organization of the people, which is at the heart of all spontaneous insurrectionary movements. Let's dream that the workers in the sectors of electricity, taxation, transportation, education, healthcare and agriculture – "for a better world" – incite strikes in which that which is cost-free ruins profit-making.

The creation and multiplication of food co-ops offers us a recourse to the risk of famine; they avoid the poisons of industrialized agriculture; they strengthen the power of mutual aid and propagate an example of peaceful insurrection that protects us from bread riots and the war of all against all.

The proposition "the State is no longer anything, let's be everything!"<sup>11</sup> here reveals, in its existential and social gravitation, its poetic practice.

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<sup>11</sup> *L'État n'est plus rien soyons tout* is the title of a book that the author published in 2010 (éditions Rue des cascades).