

“The Reasons of Wrath”¹ by Raoul Vaneigem²

One is entitled to be astonished at the amount of time that has been necessary for such a great number of men and women – whose existence is a daily battle against the profit machine and its deliberate attempts to turn life and the earth into a desert – to emerge from their lethargy and resignation.

How could people tolerate, in such persistent silence, the arrogance of the financial powers, the States that are controlled by those interests, and the representatives of the people who only represent their own selfish interests and make laws and morals for us?

This silence was, in fact, carefully maintained. Attention was diverted by the making of a lot of noise concerning political quarrels in which the conflicts between and couplings of the Left and the Right ended in exhaustion and ridicule. Sometimes sneakily, sometimes overtly, war was incited between the poor, those who are even poorer and refugees from war, poverty and dictatorial regimes. Until the moment that we realized that, during this perfectly organized inattention, the machine that crushes the living kept on turning without interruption.

But people had to become aware of the progress of desertification, of the increasing pollution of the land, the oceans and the air, of the progress of capitalist rapacity and pauperization that will go as far as threatening the very survival of the species, including ours.

The silence maintained by the lies of our sources of information [*nos informateurs*] was a silence full of noise and fury.

This is what clarifies things. People finally understand that the real troublemakers are the States and the financial interests that command them, not the breakers of luxury showcases that taunt the victims of consumerism and increasing pauperization with the same cynicism as that displayed by the politicians of both genders, no matter what party or faction they claim to be members of.

Those who stormed the Bastille on 14 July 1789, knew, if only from faint glimmers, just a little about the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which they

¹ *Les raisons de la colère*, literally “reasons for the anger,” perhaps a punning reference to *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel by John Steinbeck. In French, “grapes” is *raisins*. Cf. also the video entitled “GILETS JAUNES : LES RAISONS DE LA COLÈRE,” uploaded to YouTube on 16 November 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mXNEAOZsrw>.

² Dated December 2018 and published on 8 December 2018 by La Voie du Jaguar: <https://www.lavoiedujaguar.net/Les-raisons-de-la-colere>. Translated from the French by NOT BORED! 1 January 2019. All footnotes by the translator.

discovered later, without knowing too much about it, by putting into practice the liberty that Diderot, Rousseau, d'Holbach and Voltaire had sought to illuminate.

That liberty was the liberty to bring tyranny down. The visceral refusal of despotism in all its forms resisted the guillotine of the Jacobins, the Thermidorians, [Napoleon] Bonaparte, and the Monarchist Restoration – it [also] resisted those who executed the Parisian Communards; it overrode Auschwitz and the gulags.

It is certain that storming the Élysée³ would be showing too much respect for the Ubuesque henchman [*l'ubuesque palotin*]⁴ whom the Order of the Multinational Companies has placed in charge of dirty police jobs. We cannot content ourselves with destroying mere symbols. Burning down a bank doesn't blow up the banking system or the dictatorship of money. Setting fire to police precincts and the centers of administrative paperwork doesn't finish off the State (no more than firing its bigwigs and well-paid flunkies).

We must never break people, even a few cops, because a certain human conscience must be safeguarded. If the “Yellow Vests”⁵ have instead chosen to break the machines that make us pay everywhere we go and to put out of harm's way the excavators who dig profitable trenches through our landscapes, these are encouraging signs of the human progress of the revolts.

Another reassuring sign: though crowds, gregarious gatherings, can be easily manipulated, which is a fact that the cronyism that affects both the extreme Left and the extreme Right is not unaware of, here [among the “Yellow Vests”] one notes, at least for the moment, the absence of official leaders and representatives, which is something that troubles power, for how else could it seize hold of this moving nebula? Here and there one can see individuals, usually drowning amidst the masses of people, discussing things amongst themselves, demonstrating creative humor, initiative and ingenuity, even if heavy-handed security measures [*dérapages*] are always possible.

There emanates from the “Yellow Vest” movement a joyful anger. The governmental and capitalist authorities would love to call this anger blind. It is simply seeking clear-sightedness. The blindness of the rulers is always looking for glasses.

A woman in yellow declares, “I would love for him to explain to me, Macron who lives in a palace, how I can live on 1,500 Euros per month.” Or how people can tolerate budgetary restrictions that affect their health, non-industrial

³ A palace, the official residence of the president of France. Its current resident is Emmanuel Macron.

⁴ Cf. Alfred Jarry, *Ubu roi* (1896). Palotin was one of Ubu's henchmen.

⁵ See Raoul Vaneigem, “The ‘Yellow Vests’: Everything is possible, even self-managing assemblies in the middle of street intersections, villages and neighborhoods,” an interview conducted on 11 December 2018: <http://www.notbored.org/yellow-vests.pdf>.

agriculture, education, the removal of railway lines and the destruction of the landscape – all to the profit of real estate and commercial complexes?

Or the petrochemicals and industrial pollution that endanger the survival of the planet and its populations? To which Palotin the First responded with an ecological measure: a tax on the fuel that commuters must buy. This dispenses with the very idea of touching the profits of Total and the other oil companies. He had already shown his concern for the environment when [on 9 April 2018] he sent 2,500 gendarmes to Notre-Dames-des-Landes⁶ to destroy collective vegetable gardens, a sheep pen, hand-made buildings, and the experience/experiment [*l'expérience*] of a new society.

And what to say about taxes and fees that, far from profiting those who pay them, are used to bail out bank embezzlers? The hospitals that lack medical personnel? The farmers who re-enrich [*renaturent*] the soil but are deprived of the subsidies that instead go to the agribusinesses and [thus increase] the pollution of the earth and the water? The high-school students confined in concentration-camp farms where the market comes to choose its slaves?

“Proletarians of all countries,” Scutenaire⁷ said, “I have no counsel to give you.”

As the vogue for democratic totalitarianism proves, it is obvious that all modes of government – from the past until now – have only aggravated our alarming inhumanity. The cult of profit jeopardizes solidarity, generosity and hospitality. The black hole of profitable efficiency little by little absorbs the joy of living and its galaxies. No doubt it is high time to “conduct our affairs ourselves,”⁸ *against* the affairs that are conducted against us and that are defeating us.

If we judge it on the basis of the liberties of commerce, which exploit and kill the living, liberty is always frail. A trifle is enough to overturn it and change it into its opposite. A trifle can restore it.

Let us take care of our own life, which engages the life of the world.

⁶ Where a ZAD (a zone to be defended) had been created and developed in order to protest against and prevent the building of an airport on publicly owned lands. Cf. François de Beaulieu, “Usage of the Commons at Notre-Dame-des-Landes, Yesterday and Today”: <http://www.notbored.org/Beaulieu.pdf>.

⁷ Louis Scutenaire, a Belgian Surrealist (1905-1987). Cf. Raoul Vaneigem, *Louis Scutenaire* (Paris: Seghers, 1991).

⁸ François Guizot, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, speaking in front of Parliament on 21 January 1845.